Commentary

VOLUME NINETY • NUMBER FOUR • OCTOBER 1990

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Books in Review: James Q. Wilson on Kevin Phillips / Robert Alter / Jacob Heilbrunn / Kenneth S. Lynn

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Editor-in-Chief
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Editor
Neal Kozodoy

Managing Editor: Marion Magid
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EDITORIAL & BUSINESS OFFICES: 165 E. 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022
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Letters from Readers

Germany United

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Josef Joffe, in "One-and-a-Half Cheers for German Unification" [June], analyzes the social, economic, and political ingredients that poisoned the Second Reich and the Weimar Republic. He concludes that these ingredients are "scarcely" found in contemporary Germany, and that, upon German unification, a new wave of darkness is not likely to go forth. . . .

In his opening paragraph, Mr. Joffe indicates that the Weimar Republic paved the way for the rise of the Nazi party. . . . But what doomed the Weimar Republic was the enemy within: the German Communists who were anti-democratic and collaborated with the Nazis in destroying the state. That eminent historian George F. Kennan, in his *Russia and the West Under Lenin and Stalin*, describes the role of the Communists as the instrument of a foreign power, as follows:

> . . . [T]he political behavior of the German Communists . . . in the crucial years of Hitler's rise to power . . . was negative and destructive. It was the denial of their support to Brüning which forced him to rule by emergency decree instead of by a parliamentary majority and created precedents which were later to be most unfortunately exploited by Hitler himself. It was their use of violence—their incessant brawling on the streets with both Socialists and Nazis—which provided much of the excuse for the eventual monopolization of the police power by right-wing elements and its use against the liberties of the Republic—indeed for Nazi violence of all sorts. . . . [W]hen, on November 6, 1932, new general elections were held in which there was a marked and surprising decline of Nazi voting strength, . . . how did the Communists react? They . . . intensified their attack on the Social Democrats. . . . Moscow was convinced the road to a Soviet Germany lay through Hitler.
>
> . . . [T]he strength of the republican forces in Germany, throughout the period of the 20's and the first two years of the 30's, would have been of a different order had the political potential of these two million to five million Communists been added to the cause of democracy instead of being subtracted from it and mobilized against it. . . . [N]o one can deny, I think, Stalin's responsibility for the failure of the Weimar Republic. . . .

Louis Fischer, a historian of a different orientation, in his work, *Russia's Road from Peace to War*, expresses a similar view:

> . . . The Nazi losses [of 1932] and the Communist gains frightened industrial magnates and the military. They had money and power, but they saw that the working class and large sections of the middle class were deserting the German state which rocked from simultaneous blows by Nazis and Communists in the Reichstag, in strikes which both parties supported, . . . and in the deliberate stimulation by the two parties of confusion and discontent. . . . German Communist leaders of my acquaintance did not conceal the intent of their made-in-Moscow political strategy: "Yes, these actions will bring Hitler to power; he will be finished in six months and then our turn will come."

Mr. Joffe's failure to recognize the collaboration of the Communists with the Nazis as a key ingredient in the destruction of the Weimar Republic causes him to underestimate the achievements of the Weimar Republic against all the odds, and makes his analysis inaccurate.

HARRY V. LERNER
Bethesda, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Josef Joffe ends his "One-and-a-Half Cheers for German Unification" by giving unification a full three cheers. Having survived the trauma of Nazi death camps, including Auschwitz and Dachau, I see no cause for cheering the emergence of a powerful German state. . . .

It is imperative that some safeguards be built into a united Germany to allay the concerns of those who remember the reign of terror and evil in the Third Reich. Mr. Joffe fails to address these legitimate concerns. According to him, the rightist Republikaners are losing ground, and "the neo-Nazis are on the verge of extinction." But reports of violent demonstrations by skinheads in Berlin, Leipzig, and Munich belie these assumptions. There is a new phenomenon of young Germans vandalizing

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NUCLEAR ENERGY: VITAL TO U.S. SECURITY

Before August 2, Americans saw little reason to worry about energy or the Middle East. But the Iraqi blitzkreig into tiny Kuwait reminded us of the frightening volatility of Mideast politics, and the folly of importing half of all the oil we use.

Our heavy dependence on foreign oil is aggravated by another related energy problem: demand for electricity is growing faster than new supplies are being added. Reliable service is suffering in parts of the U.S. and we're using more imported oil to supply electricity. Will it take a full-scale crisis, like widespread blackouts and oil cutoffs, before we do something?

One reason why the U.S. is so vulnerable to energy crises is the lack of a coherent, long-range energy policy. President Bush has asked the Department of Energy to formulate a National Energy Strategy, one that "must balance ... our increasing need for energy at reasonable prices, our commitment to a safer and healthier environment, our determination to maintain an economy that is second to none, and our goal to reduce dependence ... on potentially unreliable energy suppliers..."

Nuclear energy is one of the few available energy sources that meets the President's objectives. As a major part of our National Energy Strategy, nuclear energy can help steer the nation away from an energy crisis and toward the security that will free us from the whims of foreign nations.

Nuclear Energy Fosters Energy Independence. In 1989, we imported over 40 percent of our oil, at a cost of $860 million per week – about 40 percent of last year's $109 billion trade deficit. These staggering figures would be even worse without America's 112 nuclear energy plants. Since the 1973 oil embargo, U.S. nuclear energy plants have saved us 4.3 billion barrels of oil and $125 billion in foreign oil payments. These savings continue to mount, and new nuclear energy plants can help assure more energy independence.

Nuclear Energy Spurs Economic Growth. There is a clear, continuing relationship between electricity and economic growth. Since 1973, our Gross National Product has grown 51 percent, while electrical consumption has grown 54 percent. In contrast, use of non-electric forms of energy actually fell by six percent. Nuclear energy has a key role to play in fueling future economic growth. It has supplied 36 percent of all new electricity since 1973, and today, nuclear energy is our second-largest source of electricity, behind coal.

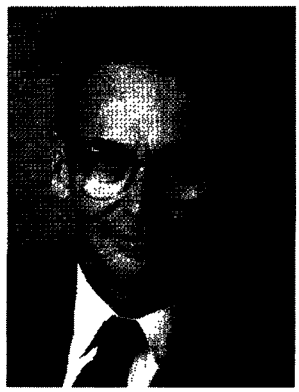
Nuclear Energy Meets Our Energy Demands. Both the U.S. economy and electrical demand are expected to grow at 2 to 3 percent each year until the end of the decade. But planned new electrical generating capacity will not meet that growth. Some utilities have already experienced demand not expected until the mid-1990s. As electricity supplies tighten, we'll need every secure generating source, including nuclear energy, to maintain reliability. And we must avoid increasing the use of oil to generate that electricity. Unfortunately, our use of oil to generate electricity has grown by more than 34 percent in the past two years.

Nuclear Energy Protects The Environment. Nuclear energy is one of the cleanest sources of electricity available for large-scale use. Last year, nuclear electric plants reduced U.S. sulfur dioxide emissions by 5 million tons, nitrogen oxide emissions by two million tons, and carbon dioxide emissions by 128 million tons The small volume of waste generated by nuclear energy plants has been safely managed at plant sites in steel-lined storage pools, posing no threat to the environment.

Nuclear Energy Saves Consumers Money. Since 1973, U.S. nuclear energy plants have saved consumers $45 billion compared to the other fuels – coals, oil and natural gas – that would otherwise have been used to supply electric power. New advanced-design nuclear plants that can be built in the 1990s will be cost-competitive with coal-fired electricity, and will provide electricity cheaper than either oil or gas-fired plants.

Nuclear Energy Has Public Support. Eighty-three percent of Americans say nuclear energy will be important in meeting our future electricity needs, and almost the same number believe the U.S. will need more nuclear energy plants. Nearly 70 percent say we should use more nuclear energy to combat the problem of greenhouse gas emissions and global warming. And, by more than 2-to-1, Americans prefer using more nuclear energy over importing more oil.

Clearly, Americans recognize the many benefits of nuclear energy, and are counting on its benefits in the future. The National Energy Strategy should allow nuclear energy to serve the needs of our country, including reducing our dependence on unstable foreign governments. By ensuring a strong future for nuclear energy, our policymakers will be helping to assure a bright energy future for Americans.



Harold B. Finger
President and Chief Executive Officer
U.S. Council For Energy Awareness

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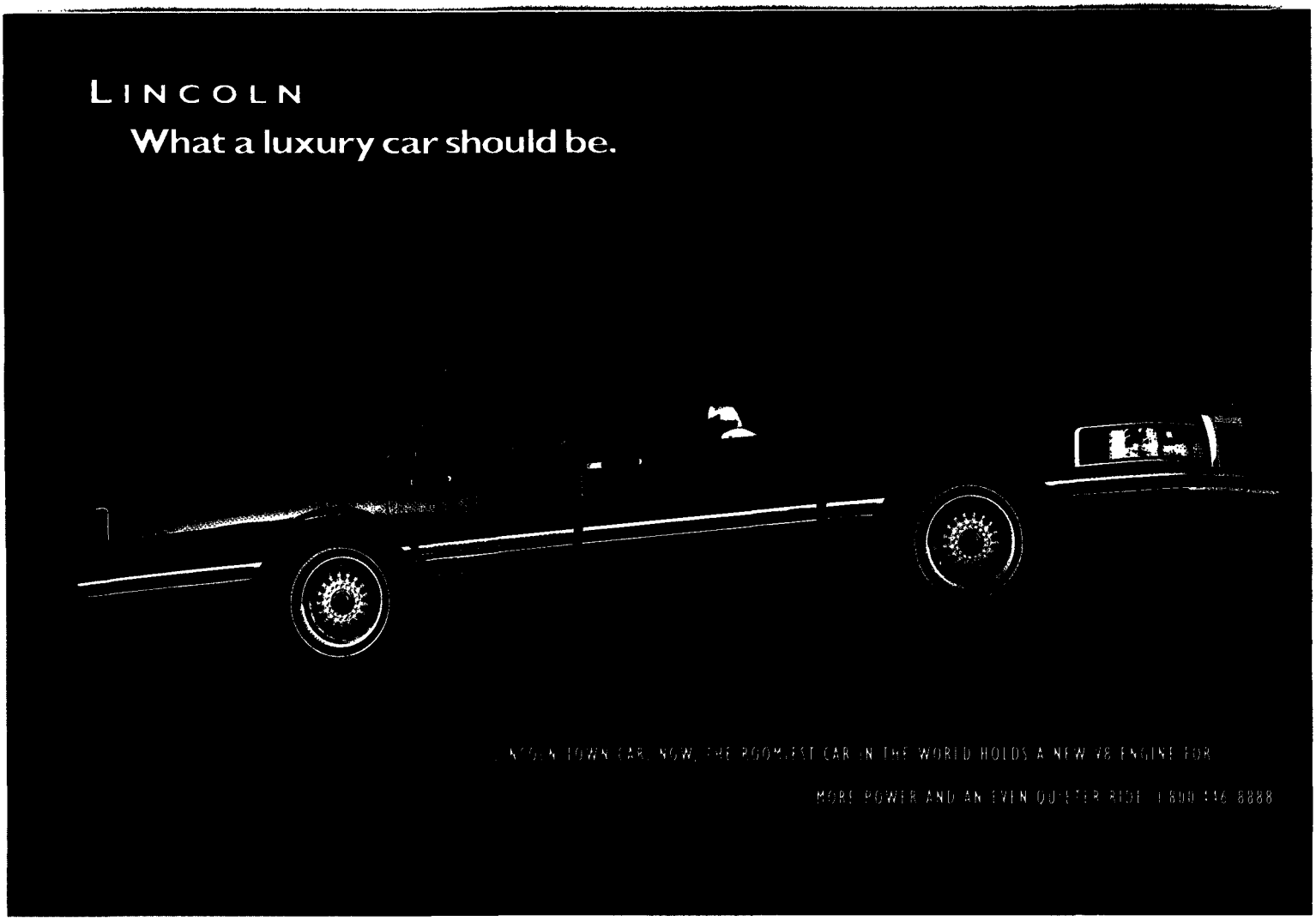

Jewish cemeteries and threatening "foreigners," continuing the work once done by their grandfathers and fathers, now too old and too rich to engage in such activities.

Two generations have been raised in East Germany without any democratic traditions. While many West Germans have made considerable progress in confronting their Nazi past, the Germans in the East have yet to fill in the blank pages of the Nazi criminal period in their history books.

East German youth must henceforth be exposed to an educational process that will, perhaps, dampen their nationalistic fervor; infuse them with some humility; teach them that democracy means not only the right to travel and to earn a decent living, but also tolerance for others and respect for the human rights of Jewish, Turkish, and other minorities; help them to understand that freedom of expression does not give them the right to beat up Jews or to desecrate cemeteries and synagogues and that there can be no healing without remorse and without facing the truth of the Holocaust.

Mr. Joffe fails to mention a widespread trend in both Germanys to erase their "ancient history" and start afresh as one nation, "new, reborn." A campaign has been launched to bury the ugly past and to dismantle monuments to the Holocaust, beginning with the Dachau museum.

This effort to institutionalize forgetfulness and forgiveness in a "new Germany" ought to be firmly opposed. . . . Jewish concerns must be emphatically and clearly reiterated . . . and made part of the constitution of the newly unified state. This should include an acknowledgment of German responsibility for the Holocaust and an obligation to the victims, as well as to the Jewish state that gathered in the surviving remnant. . . .

The U.S. Congress and the American media have a moral obligation not to repeat the mistakes of silence and indifference made during World War II. They inherit that obligation from their predecessors, who at the end of the war traveled to Buchenwald and Dachau to serve as witnesses to the horrors of the Holocaust. . . .

As a prisoner at Dachau who was liberated in May 1945, I remember the congressional delegation and a group of eighteen American newspaper publishers and editors who had come to view the carnage. I remember the grief on their faces. Some Senators could not hold back their tears. Their shock revealed that they had never heard of or read about the Final Solution, about the Nazi extermination of Jews in the heart of Europe, even though reports of these atrocities were available.

The delegations had been invited to inspect the camps by General Dwight Eisenhower, then Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces in Europe. Prophetically, Eisenhower cabled Washington that he wanted the evidence of atrocities recorded and preserved in photographs so that the Germans would never be tempted to deny their guilt and "to give first-hand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to propaganda."

The tendency to deny the Holocaust, as Eisenhower had feared, is growing everywhere, along with anti-Semitism. Contrary to Mr. Joffe's analysis, it is not anti-Semitism, but memory, that is "on the verge of extinction." . . .

ALFRED LIPSON
Bayside, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . According to Josef Joffe, the Germans saw in Hitler the savior who could free Germany from the

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"grip of economic agony" (hyperinflation coupled with unemployment). Under Hitler's leadership this could be done by vanquishing "the enemy within (the Jews) and the enemy without (Russian Bolsheviks and Western capitalists) who together had conspired to enslave the German nation." This is not quite correct. Hitler never differentiated between inner and outer Jewish enemies. Jews (whether inside or outside Germany), international Bolsheviks, and international capitalists were simply one foe in three disguises—but all Jews nonetheless. Comparable charges were already widespread in Germany, Austria, and France through anti-Semitic political parties which date back to the closing third of the 19th century. By the time Hitler came to power, anti-Semitism was supranational to the point where it was sponsored by international congresses. . . .

It would be nice if we could attribute anti-Semitism to "economic agony." That would give us a relatively simplistic solution to an otherwise intractable phenomenon which still threatens the lives of all Jews, including those not yet born. . . .

I apologize to Mr. Joffe if he accuses me of responding to an article he did not write. I merely wish to record one reader's difficulty in sharing his optimism for even half-a-cheer.

LEO BLOND

Bayside, New York

JOSEF JOFFE writes:

Harry V. Lerner is right in pointing to the reprehensible behavior of the German Communists during the Weimar Republic, and I am glad that he reminds us of this "key ingredient" in the destruction of the first German Republic. By extension, however, one could easily argue that the absence of a potent Communist party in West Germany today will contribute to a reunited Germany's democratic stability (the successor of the East German Communist party, the PDS, probably will not make it past the 5-percent cutoff required for representation in parliament).

Alfred Lipson is not quite fair in turning my "one-and-a-half cheers" into a full "three cheers." He has doubled the cheers I am willing to bestow on this event. I agree with him that nobody should ever forget the Holocaust, and that we should watch out for phenomena such as the "skinheads in Berlin, Leipzig, and Munich." Still, there is a world of difference between the murderous, mass-based anti-Semitism of the Weimar Republic and the kind of marginal outbursts he describes. It is the difference between a headache and cancer.

I do not agree that there is a "widespread trend in both Germanys to erase their 'ancient history.'" Indeed, it was only the demise of the *ancien régime* in the GDR which, finally, made the East Germans confront their long-suppressed part in the history of Nazi Germany. At any rate, I am quite heartened by the fact that the attempt of some revisionist German historians to deny the uniqueness of the Holocaust did not work. An impressive majority of West German historians exposed the attempt for what it was: a convoluted, contorted try at absolving Germany of the crimes of the past.

Leo Blond is right in assuming that he was responding to "an article [I] did not write." Still, one of his points is worth stressing: though "economic agony" may exacerbate anti-Semitism, it is never its only cause. Perhaps anti-Semitism is an "anthropological constant" that needs no "cause" other than the presence of Jews, and thus is not amenable to "rational"

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solutions. Indeed, if you look at Poland, anti-Semitism does not even require the presence of Jews; it does quite "nicely" on its own. At any rate, my point about contemporary Germany was a rather modest one: compared to 1919 and after, anti-Semitism, as measured by the tools of social research, is mercifully small. That is a cause for reassurance, but not for smugness.

To all my critics: I share your anxiety and worries, but I still think it useful to remind American readers of the heartening difference between Germany 1990 and its predecessors of 1871, 1919, and 1933.

Self-Esteem & the Schools

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . Chester E. Finn, Jr. begins his article, "Narcissus Goes to School" [June], by citing the conclusion of a California "Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility" that "the lack of self-esteem is central to most personal and social ills plaguing our state and nation as we approach the end of the 20th century." Mr. Finn disagrees with this premise whereas I am in concurrence. My problem with both the California task force and Mr. Finn lies in defining self-esteem. The task force confuses true self-esteem with a cockeyed notion of self-esteem based on group membership. The fact is that self-esteem based on such group (or sheep) mentality is antithetical to true self-esteem.

As Mr. Finn correctly points out, the "positive-thinking" brand of self-esteem practiced by the Norman Vincent Peales of this country is congruent with the basic values of individualism and self-determination that formed the basis of this nation. . . . Where Mr. Finn goes slightly awry is when he separates self-esteem from personal efficacy or sense of control over one's life.

Self-esteem without a sense of personal efficacy is not self-esteem. . . . The concept of personal efficacy is what separates free-will philosophy from determinism. It is also what separates modern conservatives from modern liberals. Conservatives believe that the individual is responsible for his successes and failures. Liberals, on the other hand, blame everything and everyone (usually Ronald Reagan) except the individual for that individual's lack of success. . . .

I agree with Mr. Finn that positive thinking is not pollyanna thinking. He is correct that reality is important. However, we must tread carefully with so-called reality, for today's reality is often exploded tomorrow. It is not realistic for a 5'4" man to play in the National Basketball Association: just ask Spud Webb. It is not realistic for a one-armed man to make it in baseball's major leagues: just ask Jim Abbott. Science tells us that a bumblebee cannot possibly fly. I guess somebody forgot to tell the bumblebee that. . . .

Robert M. Unger
Great Neck, New York

To the Editor of Commentary:

Chester E. Finn, Jr. raises an important point that should not be very surprising: ". . . a school system wanting to heighten the sense of personal efficacy among minority children will have to teach them well enough to raise their actual achievement." What Mr. Finn does not say is that the federal government and other education policymakers have known this to be true since 1970 and have systematically ignored the evidence.

In 1967, Congress authorized "Follow Through," designed to carry Head Start programs into the early elementary grades. The Follow Through program evolved into an experiment aimed at finding effective models for educating disadvantaged children. . . . The twelve models were divided into three broad categories according to their areas of primary emphasis: (1) Basic Skills—fundamental skills in reading, arithmetic, and language; (2) Cognitive-Conceptual—"learning to learn" and problem-solving skills; and (3) Affective Cognitive—development of self-concept and positive attitudes toward learning.

The results were collected by the Stanford Research Institute and analyzed by Abt Associates. Among their conclusions: while four of the twelve models produced positive results in terms of self-concept, only two of those four models produced positive results in terms of academic achievement. The two models were the basic-skills models. In other words, instruction that results in academic successes will lead to improved self-concept, but programs emphasizing self-concept do not lead to academic success, which is Mr. Finn's point. In fact, some of the "self-esteem" models produced declines in academic achievement.

The Follow Through data have not influenced federal funding and research dollars significantly. In fact, the Office of Education has funded ineffective programs at higher levels than the effective and proven programs, almost suggesting that these policy-makers think academic achievement is not a valid criterion for funding decisions.

Nicholas T. Miller
Concord, Massachusetts

Chester E. Finn, Jr. writes:

I do not believe there is any real disagreement between Robert M. Unger and me, though his letter illustrates the difficulty of clear communication in the foggy domain of "self-esteem." I had thought my article made precisely the distinctions Mr. Unger makes. Positive thinking is a fine thing, finer still when it is anchored to real achievement and fosters more of the same. A friend who wrote me privately about the article shared an apt passage from Jerome Bruner's *The Process of Education* that I had not previously encountered: "Let us not confuse ourselves," the eminent psychologist urged, "by failing to recognize that there are two kinds of self-confidence . . . one a trait of personality, and another that comes from knowledge of a subject. It is of no particular credit to the educator to help build the first without building the second. The objective of education is not the production of self-confident fools."

Nicholas T. Miller offers a useful recapitulation of important findings from the "planned-variation" model of the Follow Through program, findings that lend further strength to the points I was making in my article. He also reminds me how glad I am not to be a federal official any longer. The Department of Education, alas, is not the only agency in Washington that from time to time has "funded ineffective programs at higher levels than the effective and proven programs." The results of evaluation studies, for better and for worse, often end up mattering a great deal *less* than other factors when it comes to such policy and spending priorities.

Meanwhile, the great self-esteem engine chugs on. The First International Conference on Self-Es-

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are pleased to announce the
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MAIMONIDEAN STUDIES

Edited by Arthur Hyman

Maimonidean Studies is an international, interdisciplinary annual devoted to all aspects of Maimonides research. Articles will be featured on such subjects as: Maimonides' legal and philosophic writings, their antecedents and influence; Maimonides as biblical commentator, scientist and physician; the history of Maimonides' time; Maimonides as communal leader; the Maimonides family; and bibliographic information. While the primary language of the annual is English, some articles will be published in Hebrew, and occasionally in French and German. English summaries will be provided for those articles in other languages.

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teem is reported to have taken place in Oslo this past summer and the Washington *Times* informs us that the California legislature has before it one bill to create a state self-esteem ombudsman and another to fund the National Council for Self-Esteem to serve as a clearinghouse for information after the state's own self-esteem task force winds down. The question now, the *Times* wryly editorializes, is "whether Californians have enough self-esteem to announce they don't need a government-funded self-esteem industry to lecture them about you-know-what."

H. L. Mencken

To the Editor of Commentary:

In "Mencken on Trial" [April], Joseph Epstein has, as usual, written a thoughtful and entertaining article. But his conclusions are seriously flawed, it seems to me, by his insistence that the question of Mencken's anti-Semitism can be resolved by a simple yes or no verdict.

A criminal trial is convened in order to pass judgment on a narrowly stated issue: did the defendant, or did he not, violate a particular provision of the criminal law? The trial deals with a very specific instance; it cannot concern itself with the whole life of the defendant, let alone his personal opinions or attitudes.

Like Karl Marx and many others before and after, Mencken was no doubt anti-Semitic in some of his actions and pronouncements but not in others. Mr. Epstein himself gives enough evidence on both sides. Why not let it go at that? Why insist that Mencken's whole life either was or was not one of anti-Semitism?

Moreover, invoking the image of a criminal trial introduces a strong bias in Mencken's favor. Unlike the civil law and most situations in ordinary life, the criminal law holds that one side—the defendant's—must be completely acquitted as long as there is some reasonable doubt about guilt, even when, by a balance of probabilities, the defendant seems altogether guilty. This strong bias in favor of one side of an issue may be appropriate when an accused person's life and liberty are at stake, but is wholly inappropriate in literary or historical analysis.

Werner Cohn
Vancouver, British Columbia

To the Editor of Commentary:

It has long been clear to me that Joseph Epstein is one of our most cogent and incisive literary critics, but until I read "Mencken on Trial" I had no idea that he is also a superlative appellate lawyer.

William A. Newsom
Justice, State of California
Court of Appeal
San Francisco, California

To the Editor of Commentary:

Congratulations on your publication of "Mencken on Trial" by Joseph Epstein. The article continues your commitment to publishing unpopular opinions. . . .

Mr. Epstein is correct: Mencken was not an anti-Semite. He proclaimed his prejudices but eschewed bigotry. He used the words of his time to create a style that ranks among the greatest in American literature. It is fortunate for us that he wrote when he did; he would not be published today. . . .

Patrick J. Connolly
Virginia Beach, Virginia

To the Editor of Commentary:

We cannot help our beliefs and prejudices. What we can do is ensure that our actions are such as to counteract their negative aspects. I believe that Joseph Epstein has made it clear that H.L. Mencken was no racist. Even if he were, Mencken would remain one of my heroes because of his actions. He spoke consistently and strongly against irrational prejudice. This is surely what must count.

A.S. Russell
Edmunton, Alberta
Canada

To the Editor of Commentary:

It is always a delight to read Joseph Epstein and I relished his account of that long ago day in Babylon (Long Island) when he was bargaining with a Greek landlord about a house rental and the latter warned that ". . . you should know it takes six Syrians, four Turks, and two Jews to cheat a Greek." What a shame that Mr. Epstein was not familiar with the final clause of that old ethnic axiom, which the Greek understandably omitted. It goes: "And it takes two Greeks to cheat an Armenian."

I first heard those lines from my late father, a nature writer and poet who had briefly met H.L. Mencken and carried on a lively correspondence with him in the 1940's. In a letter to a book editor, my father once described the Sage of Baltimore as

> a man who talked anti-religion while living by the principles of religion, a world-renowned writer who had at his disposal an abundance of writers who had arrived. Yet he took the time to give advice and encouragement to a writer who had the white whale of an idea lashing about inside of him and was not able to do much about it. Mencken was a man of honor, honesty, thoughtfulness, patience. What more could you ask of a Christian?

This is just another example of the point Mr. Epstein makes so eloquently: the Mencken you saw on the printed page was often not the Mencken you got, in the flesh.

O.M. Ostlund, Jr.
State College, Pennsylvania

To the Editor of Commentary:

Joseph Epstein has done it again! I was both instructed and entertained by "Mencken On Trial." . . .

My father, who chewed on a cigar and even resembled Mencken in one of his encyclopedic poses, was born in 1889—nine years after Mencken. He always figured that folks born before the Gay 90's were bound to feel more and more out of step with the . . . society that advertises itself as "caring, and trying harder to please." . . .

Mencken's sharp pen was ecumenical. He lambasted the rich and the poor alike. . . . For a great wordsmith like him to persist in denigration and trenchant complaints about the all-inclusive incompetence of society, and the running amok of the post-bellum "booboisie," it was necessary to have been out of step with his times.

At age sixty-eight now, I too know those feelings of ennui and emptiness, . . . which creep up on me today. But when you're getting old, and the world makes you "boob" for the day, it's a delight to get a new perspective on the old problems—and read Commentary! Joseph Epstein, I salute you!

Bob Mass
Dayton, Ohio

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . Many, many years ago, when I was much younger, I read the *American Mercury* avidly, and H.L. Mencken was my idol. After I read his *Treatise on the Gods* I knew he was an anti-Semite, but

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that did not change my opinion of him.

Mencken could write. He was a master of his craft. He was opinionated, and decidedly an interesting personality.

In spite of his bigotry, I still hold him in high regard. He was entitled to his personal prejudices: he did not lay claim to being a saint.

But Joseph Epstein goes too far in his *apologia* for Mencken. Bigotry is bigotry. That Mencken had a "good" side to him is not in dispute. . . .

As an observant Orthodox Jew I do not forgive or forget Mencken's anti-Semitism. As a human being I understand it and am not surprised by it; and as one who respects those who have talent, especially when it comes to writing, I still admire him. . . .

HUGH W. SILVERMAN
Judge, Provincial Court
Toronto, Ontario
Canada

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was impressed with Joseph Epstein's "Mencken on Trial" until I came across a copy of *"KIKE!"—Anti-Semitism in America*, edited by Michael Selzer (1971), which contains the following quotation:

> The Jews could be put down very plausibly as the most unpleasant race ever heard of. As commonly encountered they lack many of the qualities that mark the civilized man: courage, dignity, incorruptibility, ease, confidence. They have vanity without pride, voluptuousness without taste, and learning without wisdom. Their fortitude, such as it is, is wasted upon puerile objects, and their charity is mainly a form of display.

The source is given as H.L. Mencken, *Treatise on the Gods*, quoted in Heywood Broun and George Britt, *Christians Only* (1931).

Unless the quotation is inaccurate or taken very far out of context, it seems to me that the case against Mencken has been proven.

M.S. ABRAMSKY
Beaverton, Oregon

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . There is an incident involving Leon Trotsky and H. L. Mencken which has some bearing on the subject of Joseph Epstein's article. . . . When Trotsky was deported from the Soviet Union in 1929, he was taken to Turkey, as agreed upon by Stalin and the Turkish ruler Kemal Pasha. He and his family lived in a house on the island of Prinkipo in the Marmara Sea. In 1931, a fire broke out in the house, destroying the library that had been assembled with great difficulty by Trotsky's friends and followers in Europe. . . .

After the fire, Trotsky moved to a house in Kadikoy on the mainland along with his wife Natalia, and several assistants. I visited him there in October 1931 and saw two letters from H. L. Mencken, who had heard about the fire from Max Eastman and sent Trotsky some books to replace the ones that had been lost.

Trotsky, in turn, sent a number of his own writings to Mencken, whereupon Mencken replied with an offer to help Trotsky rebuild his library. . . . "I will be very glad," he wrote, "to send you anything you want."

It was evident to me that Trotsky was slightly embarrassed by Mencken's offer. He knew of Mencken's reputation as a conservative, or perhaps even a reactionary, and did not want to become involved with him. He then asked me to draft a reply in English thanking Mencken for his kindness and explaining that it was easier and faster for him to get the literature he needed from friends and followers on the Continent.

What is my point in all this? Trotsky was a leading figure in the world Communist movement, the leader of the Bolshevik insurrection of 1917, the creator and first commander of the Red Army, and a Jew, a fact emphasized in endless writings about him. We know that Mencken detested Communism and detested the Leninist state which had been made possible by Trotsky's military accomplishments. We know, too, of Mencken's uncomplimentary remarks about Jews in his diaries. But how much of an anti-Semite could Mencken have been? It seems to me that a true-blue, double-barreled, dyed-in-the-wool anti-Semite would never in any way have offered to help a Communist leader and a Jewish one, to boot.

What stirred Mencken's generosity to Trotsky was an obvious sense of solidarity with a fellow writer in distress. . . . An anti-Semite, loud or soft, highly charged or reserved, would never have offered to help a Trotsky! Quite the contrary.

ALBERT GLOTZER
Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts

Andy Rooney

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "The Andy Rooney Affair" [May], Eric M. Breindel laments that as a probable result of the controversy, public persons with "views" on the sexual practices of others will keep their opinions to themselves. As obscure as the details of the Rooney affair is the reason why Mr. Breindel believes this necessarily makes for an unhappy ending. Mr. Breindel offers no explanation why (absent a showing of some danger to the public health, a point he does not emphasize) the private, consensual sexual practices of adults should be of the remotest interest to anybody else. Nor does he explain why our society should be particularly interested in hearing public expressions of prejudice or even revulsion at others' private behavior. If Mr. Rooney's remarks really were part of an honest attempt to come to terms with his own attitudes, then of course he is to be commended for attempting the effort, and all the more for doing so in public, knowing that he could expose himself to public criticism. But if his comments were just the venting of "views" about the private matters of others, the silence of shame is entirely appropriate.

PAUL WOLFSON
Washington, D.C.

ERIC M. BREINDEL writes:

Paul Wolfson's letter fails to take account of the fact that homosexuality (i.e., "the private, consensual practices of adults") is already a subject for public debate—thanks largely to the efforts of homosexuals themselves. The danger-to-public-health aspect of this question is, moreover, manifest. I didn't need to "emphasize" it. Indeed, it was in the course of commenting on the health implications of homosexual behavior—"many of the ills which kill us are self-induced"—that Andy Rooney made the remarks that led to his suspension.

Mr. Wolfson seems to be arguing that it's fine for homosexuals publicly to assert the moral legitimacy of their sexual practices—and even to demand that certain rights be conferred upon them as homosexuals—but that it's wrong for those who find these same practices unacceptable, or at least troubling, simply to say so.

I disagree.

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Mandela in America

Joshua Muravchik

NEITHER Vaclav Havel nor Lech Walesa nor Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn nor any other foreign visitor in memory was received by America with as much celebration, as much adulation, as much ecstasy as Nelson Mandela, the deputy president of the African National Congress (ANC), during his triumphal eight-day tour this past June. Only the reception accorded Pope John Paul II in 1979 compares, but the Pontiff also brought out more critics and protesters than did Mandela.

New York gave Mandela a ticker-tape parade and a rally at Yankee Stadium, and the Empire State Building was lit in the colors of the ANC. In Washington, Mandela visited with the President and then shared a press conference on the White House lawn. Later, he addressed a joint session of Congress. Altogether, hundreds of thousands attended rallies for Mandela in Detroit's Tiger Stadium, Georgia Tech's Grant Field, the Los Angeles Coliseum, and the Oakland Coliseum. Dozens of popular entertainers donated their services, while crowds, imitating the practice at ANC rallies in South Africa, danced the *toi-toi*, and Mandela T-shirts sold by the truckload. In addition, Mandela received honorary degrees from 41 institutions of higher learning.

In between, he shared cocktails with celebrities at fund-raisers for the ANC. The movie producer Arthur Krim hosted one such party in New York which was attended, said the New York *Times*, by some of the same guests who had toasted the Black Panthers at Leonard Bernstein's some twenty years ago. Still smarting from Tom Wolfe's famous account of that shindig, Krim's guests were anxious for reporters to know that the present occasion was *not* radical chic. But that rubric could easily be applied to another party the same night in New York at Robert DeNiro's TriBeCa Film Center and Grill. It was hosted by DeNiro himself together with two other film notables, Eddie Murphy and Spike Lee, and the guests included stars like Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, Robin Williams, Bette Midler, Dick Cavett, Phil Donahue, Mike Tyson, and Madonna, to name only a few. Mandela's visit made front-page news in the Washington *Post* seven days running, and New York's WABC television station juggled the schedule of the network's soap opera, *One Life to Live*, so as to avoid conflicting with live coverage of his tour.

It was not hard to figure out what all the excitement was about. The abuse of black people, through slavery and then Jim Crow, has been the most grievous sin in America's otherwise proud history. Even today race remains the most sensitive, painful issue in our national politics. American blacks know, too, that their own sufferings constitute but one chapter in the long story of catastrophes and humiliations that have been visited upon their race. South African apartheid is the present-day epitome of that story, and Nelson Mandela, as the New York *Times* put it, is "the living symbol of resistance to South African apartheid."

Mandela's battle against apartheid began in the youth wing of the ANC in the 1940's. He rose quickly to the post of president of the Transvaal ANC and deputy to the organization's national president, Chief Albert Luthuli. In the 1950's Mandela devised the "M Plan," which reorganized the ANC into a cell structure designed to circumvent the "bannings" and repressions enacted by the Pretoria regime. In the 1960's, Mandela took the lead in persuading the ANC to abandon its policy of nonviolence in favor of armed struggle, and he became the leader of its military wing, *Umkhonto we Sizwe* ("Spear of the Nation"). As such, he led a campaign of sabotage for which he was sentenced to life in prison. (Even if the ANC's violence is seen as justified by black disfranchisement, Mandela was not imprisoned, as so many Americans seem to believe, merely for his political opinions.) He served twenty-seven years, much of it at hard labor, before being released early in 1990.

Although many other ANC stalwarts were in jail with him, Mandela became the most celebrated of the ANC prisoners, and his status became the focus of much South African political activity. His release was the centerpiece of President F.W. de Klerk's bid to open negotiations about a new order for South Africa. Oliver Tambo remains president of the ANC, but his health is poor and it is unlikely that he retains greater authority than

JOSHUA MURAVCHIK, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, has just completed a new book, *Exporting Democracy*, which will be published this fall by AEI.

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his old colleague and present "deputy," Nelson Mandela.

It was not only Mandela, leader of the ANC, who commanded the hero-worship of so many Americans. It was also Mandela the man. Here was someone who had absorbed the worst the apartheid regime could dish out (short of death) and had never flinched. In recent years he had often been offered his freedom for the mere price of renouncing armed struggle and had steadfastly refused.

Mandela was known, furthermore, not just for his courage but also for his intelligence. In his early years, he and Tambo had constituted South Africa's most prestigious black law firm. He had made it through the bar despite the poor quality of education available to blacks and despite expulsions and other penalties imposed on him by school authorities for his protests against racial injustice. In prison he had mastered Afrikaans, the language of his oppressors, so as better to comprehend and express himself to them.

Today Mandela's eloquent speech, erect carriage, and dignified bearing mark him out for the aristocrat that in fact he is within the Xhosa tribe. (His "aloof," "arrogant" manner was once regarded as an organizational liability by some of his closest comrades.) It is his aristocratic heritage, too, no doubt, that enables him, on the one hand, to condescend, as he did, to the President of the United States and, on the other, to retain his modesty in the face of popular adulation. Reverend Joseph Lowery, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, captured the rapture of many when he called Mandela "the quintessence of African manhood."

As imposing a figure as Mandela cut, it loomed all the larger in comparison with so much of what passes for black leadership in America today. Mandela's precise phraseology in English—not his first language—won him an envious quip from George Bush, but it also made a striking contrast to the childish rhymes and alliterations of Jesse Jackson, the American black leader praised most often for his "eloquence." Organizers of Mandela's tour had assigned only a small role to the former presidential candidate, but exhibiting the genius for publicity that is his true forte, Jackson, as *Time* magazine put it, "had a way of getting into camera range at nearly every point along Mandela's New York route."

Meanwhile, Washington, D.C. Mayor Marion Barry, on trial for drug use and perjury, was deliberately kept off Mandela's schedule. "Marion's been very understanding about this," one of the tour organizers told the New York *Times*. When Mandela appeared for a rally at the Washington Convention Center, however, Barry, double-crossing Mandela's handlers, "pushed his way up, right onto the dais," according to Mandela's press secretary. The mayor so disrupted security arrangements, reported the Washington *Post*, that plans to allow $1,000 contributors to the ANC to shake hands with Mandela had to be scrapped.

Mandela arrived in New York just as the Reverend Al Sharpton began to serve a fifteen-day sentence for the disturbances that he called his "days of outrage." As soon as Sharpton was out, he resumed his career of exploiting and stimulating racial tension, leading a group of demonstrators who took it upon themselves to hector the "Central Park jogger" at the trial of three of her confessed assailants. To be sure, Reverend Sharpton is a "leader" by appointment of no one but himself. Even so, he manages to keep himself in the public spotlight in part perhaps because of the indulgence of the media, but in part, too, because of the failure of the more authentic black leadership to pronounce on him the unambiguous anathema he so manifestly deserves.

In contrast to Sharpton's self-appointment, Benjamin Hooks heads the largest and most venerable black organization, the NAACP, which held its 81st annual convention within days of Mandela's visit. Hooks used the occasion to accuse federal prosecutors of "Nazi-like" activity for their sting operation against Marion Barry, in which an FBI informer provided the crack cocaine that the mayor smoked. Also, one speaker at a convention workshop, Legrand Clegg, uttered what the Los Angeles *Times* called "familiar anti-Semitic calumnies." Although Clegg had some record of having said such things in the past, Hooks neither condemned his remarks at the workshop when called upon to do so by Jewish groups nor apologized for having invited him in the first place.

Given the behavior of men like Hooks, Sharpton, Barry, and Jackson, it was easy to see the point of the comment attributed to Cornel West, director of Princeton University's African-American studies program: "Nelson Mandela's visit has shown the hunger for leadership of integrity and dignity and humility in black America."

The liberal columnist Mary McGrory made much the same point, describing Mandela as "the first world-class leader [blacks] have had since Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated." More often during the visit, Mandela was likened both to King and Malcolm X. This is a curious coupling. King may not have been the only important leader of the civil-rights movement, but Malcolm was certainly not one of the others. Among those who piloted the historic victories of the 1960's were Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, A. Philip Randolph of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, John Lewis of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, and Bayard Rustin, organizer of the 1963 March on Washington. These were men not only of high intelligence, but of devotion to cause and seriousness of purpose. In this sense,

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their personas had much in common with Mandela and little with the likes of Jackson, Barry, Sharpton, and Hooks.

Yet in current mythology these heroes of the war against segregation seem all but forgotten in favor of Malcolm X, the apostle of black anger, who was not a leader but an opponent of the civil-rights movement. His claim to fame was his fierce rhetorical rejection of nonviolence, integration, and white people in general. Had he had his way, the civil-rights gains of the 1960's would not have been achieved. That he enjoys pride of place in black lore over such figures as Wilkins and Randolph bespeaks a collective preference for cursing the darkness of past abuses over striking a match of progress. And what is even more ironic, the posthumous lionization of Malcolm is rarely accompanied by condemnation of the Nation of Islam, from which he had split, or its present leader, Louis Farrakhan, although it was widely reported at the time that the men who gunned down Malcolm in Manhattan's Audubon Ballroom in 1965 were agents of Farrakhan's predecessor, Elijah Muhammed.

Blacks were by far the group most moved by Mandela's visit, but they were not the only constituency that took a special interest in it. Democrats on Capitol Hill scheduled a vote on the 1990 civil-rights bill to coincide with the ANC leader's address to Congress. The main purpose of this legislation is to impose racial quotas throughout the nation's workplaces. Overriding several recent Supreme Court decisions which restrict the use of reverse discrimination to situations where it is intended to remedy past instances of clear discrimination, the Democrats' bill would compel any employer whose workforce did not conform to prescribed racial recipes to prove that his hiring criteria were essential to job performance. Some Democrats no doubt believe in such an approach in principle, although it would move American law further from the ideal of color-blind justice than at any time since the days of segregation. Other Democrats, it seems, see political hay to be made in supporting an extreme bill that will show them to be more "pro-black" than the Republicans. And what better occasion to underscore the point than Mandela's visit?

Another constituency stirred by Mandela was the radical Left. Andrew Kopkind crowed in the pages of the *Nation*:

> Mandela . . . is . . . the first real excitement to happen to and for the Left since—who can remember? At a time when practically every political commentator in the country has proclaimed the Left dead and buried, Mandela reaffirms revolutionary values, socialist ideals, and egalitarian sentiments. . . . The Mandela trip will not rejuvenate the Left, but it did give the Left a sense that all is not lost.

And indeed Mandela's American tour was organized by a group of black leaders all of whom tilt sharply to the Left. The coordinator was Roger Wilkins, a long-time fellow of the far-Left Institute for Policy Studies, and the executive committee for the visit included Jesse Jackson and Randall Robinson, the director of the leftist TransAfrica. At his Harlem rally, Mandela shared the platform with three Puerto Rican separatists who had served prison terms for an armed assault on the House of Representatives in 1954. A fourth member of their group, who had been jailed for attempting to assassinate President Truman, was invited as well but was too ill to attend. Questioned about their presence, Mandela replied, according to the New York *Times*: "We support the cause of anyone who is fighting for self-determination, and our attitude is the same, no matter who it is. I would be honored to sit on the platform with the four comrades whom you refer to." Having thus embraced the men who shot up Congress, Mandela went on to address a joint session of that body a few days later.

What endeared Mandela to the Left also was the source of the few sour notes that sounded during his tour. Asked on a television show about his support for Yasir Arafat, Muammar Qaddafi, and Fidel Castro, Mandela replied: "Our attitude toward any country is determined by the attitude of that country to our struggle. Yasir Arafat, Colonel Qaddafi, Fidel Castro support our struggle to the hilt." Then he added: "We have no time to be looking into the internal affairs of other countries."

The Washington *Post* commmented that while this position was "hardly noble," it was "understandable at the least as the expedient tactics of a struggling Third World liberation movement." "Understandable" perhaps, but not defensible. It takes no special investment of time to know that Castro and Qaddafi are among the most tyrannical and brutal of the world's rulers and that Arafat has given lots of evidence that he aspires to follow in their footsteps. Moreover, Mandela announced before he left the United States that he plans to return to this country in October to take up the cause of American Indians. Apparently he has more time to look into some "internal affairs" than others.

This was not the only contradiction in Mandela's argument. On the very same television program, Mandela berated Jews who criticized his links to Arafat: "One of the problems we are facing in the world today are people who do not look at problems objectively, but from the point of view of their own interests. . . . One of the best examples of this is to think that because Arafat is conducting a struggle against the state of Israel, that we must therefore condemn him." The Jews were remiss, in short,

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for failing to transcend their parochial interests enough to see that they should not expect Mandela to transcend his.

A larger contradiction concerned Mandela's entire mission. He could not claim, and did not, that the ANC would be a more faithful servant of America's narrow self-interests than the Pretoria government wished to be. Would we allow it, Pretoria would gladly play the role of America's regional surrogate, whereas it seems reckless to hope that the ANC in power would be even so much as neutral between the United States and its adversaries. Yet Mandela appealed for American support on the grounds of justice and human sympathy even while asserting the ANC's right to choose its allies solely in terms of its own advantage.

It might be argued that this analogy is unfair, since the United States is a great and secure power, whereas the ANC is a small and struggling movement. This was suggested by the columnist Charles Krauthammer, who—though as redoubtable a foe as Castro, Arafat, and Qaddafi have—nonetheless came to Mandela's defense. "Necessity has its claims," he wrote. "One can hardly expect of a beleaguered people the high-minded clean-handed sifting of allies of a Sweden."

The ANC, however, is no more beleaguered than Jonas Savimbi's UNITA in Angola. Yet Mandela went out of his way during the visit "strongly [to] condemn" U.S. aid to UNITA. To put the best face on it, his objections to UNITA might be based on the fact that it has accepted aid from South Africa. But why should UNITA be blamed for that if the ANC is not accountable for the sources of its support? Indeed, UNITA's options, once the U.S. Congress cut off American aid in 1974, were even narrower than those of the ANC which, in addition to Communist backing, enjoyed real or potential support around the world from the non-Communist Left.

Moreover, all the while he was accepting assistance from South Africa, Savimbi went on condemning apartheid. Mandela, by contrast, has not merely accepted help from tyrants, he has praised, endorsed, and flattered them. Qaddafi he calls a "comrade in arms" and addresses him as "brother leader." Of Arafat he says: "We are in the same trench struggling against the same enemy: the twin Tel Aviv and Pretoria regimes, apartheid, racism, colonialism, and neocolonialism." Of Cuba he says: "There is one thing where that country stands out head and shoulders above the rest—that is in its love for human rights and liberty." For this there is no excuse of "necessity."

The morning after Mandela's controversial television remarks he addressed the UN, declaring: "We're all moved by the fact that freedom is indivisible, convinced that the denial of the rights of one diminishes the freedom of others." Perhaps moved by these words, seven Kenyan women greeted Mandela with an open letter when he stopped in Nairobi on his way home from the U.S. They appealed for his intercession on behalf of their husbands who have been imprisoned or gone into hiding for instigating protests on behalf of pluralism and multiparty democracy. Mandela ignored the women's plea, and instead issued a ringing defense of the Kenyan dictator, Daniel arap Moi.

Mandela's betrayal of human rights in Kenya was to go largely unnoticed, as did a friendly visit he had paid to the monstrous Ethiopian dictator, Mengistu Haile Mariam, prior to his American tour. But his celebrations of Castro, Arafat, and Qaddafi did register on ethnic antennae in America.

Thus, Mayor Xavier Suarez of Miami withdrew an official welcome of Mandela and joined four other Cuban-American mayors in criticizing his stance on Castro's human-rights record. And when Mandela appeared in Miami to address a meeting of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, he was greeted by protesters, apparently the only time this happened during his tour.

Jewish Americans, too, were alarmed by some of Mandela's comments—specifically about Arafat and Qaddafi—but their reaction was less straightforward. Long before Mandela's arrival, Jewish organizations knew all about his meetings with, and praise of, these two Arab leaders. Some of the more militant community spokesmen had threatened to demonstrate against Mandela, but Mayor David Dinkins of New York warned that this would be "tactically very, very unwise" because some blacks might take "great umbrage." Evidently hoping to find a way out of this dilemma, the major Jewish organizations decided to send a delegation to meet with Mandela in Europe prior to his journey to the United States.

"It was a warm session with good personal feelings on all sides," reported Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). The other Jewish participants said much the same thing in the statements they issued afterward, although neither Mandela nor the ANC seems to have issued any statement assessing the encounter from their side. All the Jewish spokesmen reported that Mandela had voiced unequivocal support for Israel's right to exist, although none explained how this might be reconciled with his earlier declaration about being in the same trench with Arafat.

Foxman's statement and that of Henry Siegman of the American Jewish Congress also said that Mandela had concurred in Israel's need for "secure borders." But this was a bit of casuistry. The term "secure borders" is widely understood to connote boundaries that are more defensible against attack than Israel's were at the outset of the Six-Day War

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of 1967. Mandela, however (as Siegman conceded), made it clear that to him the term meant the '67 borders. Hence his support for Israel's existence "within secure borders" constituted a qualification, not an enlargement, of his declaratory acceptance of Israel's right to exist.

Foxman also reported that Mandela had offered "sincere apologies" for past statements, but according to the other Jewish participants, Mandela had only expressed "regret" for the distress his earlier comments might have caused. (Those comments included his remark that "there are many similarities between our struggle and that of the PLO," and that "if the truth alienates the powerful Jewish community in South Africa, that's too bad.") In any case, the Jewish leaders pronounced themselves reassured and eager to join in Mandela's welcome. Foxman announced: "We will welcome Mandela . . . as the great hero of freedom." And Siegman hailed Mandela as a "moral giant." Yet when Mandela reiterated his support for Arafat and Qaddafi on television, Siegman, who was among the audience participants, rose to denounce this position as "amoral."

Though Siegman's manifest distress was surely representative of the feeings of the Jewish community, those feelings were kept under wraps, no doubt for fear of exacerbating an already tense black-Jewish relationship. The closest they came to open expression was when the Greater Miami Jewish Federation, perhaps emboldened by its Cuban-American neighbors, declared: "We separate Mr. Mandela's role as a symbol for the struggle of freedom and equality in South Africa, from that of Mr. Mandela's statements as an individual who supports terrorists, terrorism, and oppression."

Cubans and Jews had particular reasons to be distressed with Mandela, but his comments about Castro, Arafat, and Qaddafi, as well as his visits to Mengistu and Moi, raise a wider question. The hopes for freedom of millions of South African blacks rest with Mandela, and even the plans of the white government in Pretoria for some kind of democratic transition are heavily invested in him. The question is whether Mandela himself understands and believes in freedom and democracy.

That Mandela is a man of the Left there is no question. But exactly what variety of leftist he is remains unclear. In the late 1940's he proposed to exclude Communists from the ANC youth movement. Some fifteen years later, at his trial in 1964, he was confronted with some lectures in his handwriting that had been seized by the police. They bore such titles as "How To Be a Good Communist," and the prose was pure Stalinist boiler-plate, littered with allusions to "the great qualities of revolutionary geniuses like Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin." Mandela acknowledged that the handwriting was his, but he explained that he had merely copied a draft authored by a Communist friend in order to offer some editorial help. Mandela affirmed at the trial that he was "not a Communist" and had "never been a member of the Communist party." He said, however, that he believed in "socialism" and had been "influenced by Marxist thought." At a press conference soon after his release from jail, Mandela was asked if he is a member of the Communist party. "What my individual views are is a personal matter," he said, "but let me say that I belong to no other organization apart from the ANC." In July, when the South African Communist party (SACP) held a rally in Soweto to launch its renewed public activities after decades of being banned, Mandela, though presenting himself as an ally rather than a member, shared center stage with the SACP chief, Joe Slovo.

Whatever Mandela's own ideological position, his rhetoric bears the earmarks of years spent within a Communist milieu. There are frequent references to "comrades," including "Comrade Castro" and "Comrade Gorbachev." Asked about the ANC's appeal to South African youth, he speaks of the concordance between "the line" of the ANC and "the line" of the nation's youth. And when asked whether the ANC prefers socialism or capitalism, he replies: "As somebody has said, we do not care whether the cat is black or white, as long as it can catch mice." The "somebody" was Deng Xiaoping, who used this metaphor to explain that even with some market reforms, the Chinese economy would remain socialist.

If Mandela himself is close to the SACP, the ANC is, if anything, closer still. In 1960, when Mandela convinced the ANC to take up armed struggle, Slovo, according to Heidi Holland's sympathetic history of the ANC, played the instrumental role of putting the same policy shift across in the councils of the SACP. At that time the ANC admitted only blacks and the SACP was a largely white organization. But from its inception, *Umkhonto* was racially integrated, functioning as the military wing of both the ANC and the SACP. Mandela was its original commander and Slovo was its chief of staff from the mid-1960's until the late 1980's when he turned that office over to a fellow Communist, Chris Hani. *Umkhonto* thus served as a wedge through which more and more Communist influence flowed into the ANC.

Today, the SACP has a heavy presence in the 35-member executive committee of the ANC. At its July public launching, the SACP revealed the names of 22 of its leaders. This list showed that the ANC executive includes nine acknowledged Communists. At the same time, the SACP declared that the identity of other leading cadres would remain secret. Surely, many of these are also ANC leaders, since it is the party's main area of activity.

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But how many? Several years ago the CIA estimated that half the ANC executive were Communists, while South African intelligence put the number somewhat higher. The respected British journal, *Africa Confidential*, now asserts that fully 27 of the 35 are Communists, though without revealing its sources. Mandela has publicly denied the figure 27, but how, if he is not a party member himself, would he know?

But whatever the exact numbers, the SACP's influence in the ANC is enormous and probably dominant. Assume, for argument's sake, that as few as one-third of the ANC executive are party members—a rock-bottom estimate. All historical experience suggests that, given their discipline and dedication, this is more than enough for the Communists to dominate a body, except where the remainder consists of a disciplined anti-Communist bloc. And there is little evidence that there are any *anti*-Communists (as distinct from non-Communists) within the ANC leadership. Oliver Tambo, the ANC leader most clearly identified as non-Communist, called the ANC-SACP alliance in 1981 "a living organism."

Of course, the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and even in the Soviet Union itself makes the implications of being a Communist, or a sympathizer or ally of Communism, much less clear than they used to be, but it hardly guarantees that those who have been in that camp will now suddenly become democrats. Indeed, the least reassuring thing about the ANC in the months since its unbanning (and since Mandela's release) is its failure to follow democratic norms in its own behavior. In marked contrast to Eastern Europe in 1988 and 1989, where the demand was that the authorities hold "round-table" dialogues with *all* elements of the opposition, the ANC has been demanding that Pretoria deal with it alone.

In recent years the South African government had tried hard to open a dialogue with Chief Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi. A former ANC leader, Buthelezi heads his own largely Zulu organization, Inkatha, which favors peaceful change and capitalism and opposes economic sanctions against South Africa. Though a moderate, Buthelezi foiled apartheid's master plan by spurning independence for the Zulu tribal homeland, and he refused to join any formal dialogue unless Mandela was released and included. In the meantime, bloody conflict between Inkatha's followers and those of the ANC began to take scores, and then hundreds, of lives.

When Mandela finally gained his release this year, it was announced that he and Buthelezi would meet and work jointly to quell the violence. But then Mandela, apparently under orders from the ANC executive, reneged. Instead, the ANC launched a "general strike" designed to force the Pretoria authorities to crush Inkatha. The strike failed, resisted not only by supporters of Inkatha, which stands to the ANC's Right, but also by several black groups more radical than the ANC who suspected, not unreasonably, that if the ANC succeeded in destroying one competitor it might then turn on others.

In addition, in April Mandela confirmed allegations of torture and killings of ANC dissidents held in its own prisons in Angola. Mandela insisted, however, that these acts were contrary to ANC policy and that those responsible had been disciplined. Yet two months later, another group of former ANC member-prisoners emerged with still more such gruesome tales. Admittedly, terrible things always happen in guerrilla wars. But the harshness with which the ANC has treated not only its own dissidents but also other anti-apartheid groups which it views as competitors shows how far the organization still is from having absorbed a democratic ethos.

If this is the least reassuring thing about the ANC, the least reassuring thing about Mandela himself is his wife Winnie, to whom he is fiercely loyal. She enjoyed considerable attention in her own right during the U.S. tour. Even after her husband spoke, crowds at the rallies chanted for her: "Win-nie, Win-nie." In New York and Washington, she addressed rallies of her own, at one of which Mrs. Harry Belafonte said of her: "She has lived up to every bit of expectation and wonderment that we had. . . . She's a wonderful role model for women." At a Harlem rally, according to the Washington *Post*, "The crowd exploded when Winnie Mandela called Harlem 'the Soweto of America' and said that, if negotiations in South Africa break down, 'we want you to be there if we go back to the bush and fight against the white man.' " Her threats of violence were repeated in other forums and seemed to have enhanced her popularity in the U.S. In South Africa, however, her affinity for violence has made her controversial.

In the mid-1980's the ANC had adopted the slogan "make the townships ungovernable," "townships" being the term for the suburban ghettos where most blacks live. In response, a wave of terror and murder was launched against black local officials, police, and others suspected of being "collaborators." This mayhem featured acts of "necklacing"—that is, execution by igniting a gasoline-filled tire around the victim's neck. In a 1986 speech at a Soweto rally, Mrs. Mandela proclaimed: "With our necklaces, we will liberate this country." During her American visit, Phil Donahue apologetically asked her about this on his television show and she replied: "That was quoted completely out of context." Yet Accuracy in Media has circulated videotaped clips of her speech, and anyone can see that there was no ambiguity about her message. Moreover, in the liberal South African magazine *Frontline*, the prominent Sowetan journalist and editor Nomavenda Mathiane writes that Mrs. Mandela's speech

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shocked the community. Until then, the necklacing had been done by teenagers, "but when it came from Winnie's mouth, it seemed that barbarism was now being legitimized and institutionalized."

This summer, Jerry Richardson, "coach" of the "Mandela United Football Club," was found guilty of the murder of fourteen-year-old Stompie Mokhetsi Seipei, one of Soweto's adolescent anti-apartheid activists. The "Football Club" apparently never played a game, but constituted a kind of goon squad that lived in Mrs. Mandela's house. It served as her bodyguard and was infamous for its violent quarrels with other residents of the community. In 1989, Richardson and members of his "team" abducted Stompie and three others and took them to Mrs. Mandela's home. There, according to the testimony of the three surviving victims, Mrs. Mandela denounced them as informers and demanded that they accuse a white clergyman with whom they worked of sexually abusing them. They further testified that when they refused, she beat them with her fists, then called for a *sjambok* and whipped all four. She then left them in the hands of Richardson and his "team." Young Stompie's battered body was found some days later, dead of stab wounds.

Grim as it is, the Stompie case may not have been an isolated incident. During the campaign to root out "collaborators," "people's courts" were set up in the townships to legitimate some of the violence. Nomavenda Mathiane has written that in Soweto, "some have for years known of courts and punishments behind [Mrs. Mandela's] walls, and when neighbors went to the leaders to tell of the screams the leaders said it was the work of the struggle."

Both the necklacing quote and the Stompie case had been reported in the U.S., but they seem to have given Mrs. Mandela's admirers here little pause. "A lot of things have been hurled at her because she has been an authentic freedom fighter [on] her own," the New York *Times* quoted Jesse Jackson as saying. "I have no reason to doubt her courage or her character." Journalists, too, were so reticent about these incidents that Phil Donahue was apparently the only one to ask her about them—and he did so in an entirely obsequious way.

The press was even more reticent about her remarks at a rally in the Washington, D.C. Convention Center. "Comrade Randall Robinson, Comrade Jesse Jackson, Comrade Harry Belafonte, and all my comrades," she began. She then spoke of her movement's need for financial help in order to provide relief and assistance to its persecuted activists. She spoke of its 20,000 exiles who will need homes. She spoke of the families of the men who are in prison or have died in the struggle that are "without any assistance because if you are a Communist in South Africa no one wants to come anywhere near you." Although it is conceivable that she misspoke, the meaning of her words was clear: she was referring to the members of her movement in general as Communists. Plenty of reporters were present and the speech was broadcast live on television, but none of the print media, as best I can tell, mentioned it.

To be sure, whether Mandela, or Mrs. Mandela, or those who surround Mandela on the ANC executive committee are Communists is not nearly so portentous a question as it was just a couple of years ago, before the collapse of Communism at its center. Nevertheless, the hopes for a peaceful and democratic future for South Africa will depend largely on Mandela's ability to free himself from the baggage of a lifetime spent in a milieu heavily influenced by Communism—a baggage of deceit, distorting lenses, and disastrously wrong ideas.

It is true that Mandela is currently strong in his assertions of democratic conviction. Addressing the Congress, he invoked Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln, and he spoke of the value of multiparty democracy. In an earlier day, these words would have had to be taken with many grains of salt, for Communists have disingenuously appropriated the same terminology many times. The Lincoln Brigade and the Jefferson School were American Communist fronts, and both Fidel Castro and Nicaragua's Sandinistas often spoke on the way to power of their commitment to pluralist democracy.

On the other hand, the very people who pioneered and engineered this deceit—the rulers of the Kremlin—have now all but acknowledged that "bourgeois" Western democracy is the only authentic kind. So what are we to think? The answer is that the touchstone of Mandela's and the ANC's democratic credentials must be their willingness to negotiate not only with the Pretoria regime, but also with other black (and Colored and Indian) groups of disparate philosophies; to create fully democratic internal structures of their own; and to insist that the ANC's ally, the South African Communist party, come fully out into the light of day.

As for his economic policy, Mandela says that he is not opposed to private enterprise and favors a mixed economy. But he speaks, too, of the need to "restructure" the economy, redistribute wealth, and increase the role of government, including nationalization of some major industries. As far as he is concerned, the ANC "has already settled this question. Our policy is set out in the Freedom Charter." That document declares: "The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks, and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole; all other industry and trade shall be controlled to assist the well-being of the people. All people shall have equal rights to trade where they choose, to manufacture, and to enter all trades, crafts, and professions." An ANC Workshop on Economic Policy held in Harare, in Zimbabwe, a few months ago, probably represents

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the organization's latest systematic thinking on this subject. While its summary document also calls for a mixed economy, it emphasizes that "nationalization would be an essential part of . . . reconstruction." Currently state-owned industry would be retained; recently privatized industry would be renationalized; and "new state corporations" would be created in still other sectors.

What Mandela and the ANC seem to have in mind, then, is not a wholly state-run economy on the old Soviet model, but a state-dominated one. The vast disparities of wealth between white and black in South Africa do cry out for reform, especially to equalize the quality of education, and to provide some kind of social safety net within the country's means. Yet the path to which Mandela and his confreres are pointing would lead not to economic uplift for his people, but to ruin. The ANC might no longer—as once it would have done—try to recreate the Soviet system, especially with the Soviets themselves now warning off all would-be emulators. Instead it might merely duplicate, say, the Tanzanian or Zambian economy. In light of the Soviet global retreat, this might be of little geostrategic concern to America. But the bitter result for South Africa could be that apartheid would be abolished with an accompanying plunge of the entire country into economic disaster.

Victories do not always bring the results that were foreseen. In the American civil-rights movement, most of us imagined that the defeat of segregation would open up a golden age of racial harmony and black progress. Although considerable progress has been registered, our idyllic vision was naive. In South Africa, an evil system is in its death throes, and it is fitting to salute Nelson Mandela for his battle against it. Yet there is no assurance that freedom and prosperity will follow, nor—given his associations and some of his expressed ideas—that Mandela will contribute to their achievement. With the fate of South Africa resting in such considerable measure in his hands, it well serves neither Mandela nor his country for Americans, because of the continuing tenderness of our own racial wounds, to mute these concerns, as almost all Americans, black and white alike, did during his unrelievedly triumphal tour.

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The Killing Fields of Kiev

Marco Carynnyk

HALF an hour's drive east of Kiev—from the gold-domed cliffs that survey the Eurasian expanses, across the Paton Bridge over the Dnieper, through the snarled streets of the new residential districts, the stucco on the apartment houses crumbling, the balconies cluttered with canned food and drying clothes, along the Avenue of the Sixtieth Anniversary of October toward the town of Brovary, where the road bends north to Byelorussia, past a traffic-control tower manned by militiamen with submachine guns, to a weedy shoulder almost opposite a garrison on a prerevolutionary artillery range—a sign the size of a folded map points into a pine forest. After missing the turn and doubling back, my companion, a young Red Army major, and I steer along a dirt track until we reach a second sign, which bans further traffic. It has been raining all morning. Now, as we get out of the car and walk a hundred yards past barrows overgrown with conifers and grass, the rain stops and we see the place: a cobbled path leading to a mound; a low retaining wall, at a right angle to the path, made of flat stones set on edge; and in the middle a flesh-red granite slab, the height of a man, with a chiseled inscription: "Eternal Memory."

This is Bykivnia, and among these barrows schoolboys once played soccer with human skulls: tens of thousands of people, perhaps even a quarter of a million, were executed in the prisons of Kiev with a bullet through the temple or the medulla oblongata, brought here by the truckload, and cast into quicklimed pits. Four official commissions have investigated this annihilation in the last forty-five years. Yet the full story of who the victims are, who killed them, and how they came to be buried here has yet to be exhumed.

IT WAS the spring of 1937, and the victories of one dictator were whetting the appetites of others. In Berlin, Adolf Hitler was casting a covetous eye toward the east and promising that it would swim in plenty under Nazi rule. In Madrid, Francisco Franco was calling in German bombers to level Guernica. In Rome, Benito Mussolini was ordering his troops to Abyssinia. And in Moscow, Joseph Stalin, who had already starved to death five, six, seven million Ukrainians—demographers would puzzle over the exact figure for decades to come—was pushing through a party resolution that would increase arrests tenfold and authorizing the NKVD, or secret police, to use "methods of physical pressure."

In the hamlet of Bykivnia, trucks loaded with lumber were turning off the Kiev-Brovary highway and burrowing into the forest. Soon a green fence topped by barbed wire walled off ten acres. When the construction was finished, trucks continued to plod into the forest. Their loads concealed under canvas, they came in convoys, cars containing military men, the headlights turned off, before and after them. The gate swung shut when the convoy had entered; lights flared up behind the fence; and a commotion arose. Before dawn the trucks set off in the opposite direction, and then the forest was quiet again.

Half a dozen young men patroled the site with police dogs. Villagers were confounded by the odd clothes they wore when they ventured from the compound: a boot on one foot and a shoe on the other, or a dress, makeup, and a shawl. When one guard was asked where he worked, he replied that he was employed in a factory "the likes of which you won't find anywhere in Europe."

The famine of the early 1930's had decimated the villages and towns. Now, in 1937, the city dwellers lived in fear, dreading the night when a Black Maria would pull up beside their building and take someone away. Families kept vigil at prison walls, importuned NKVD offices, and even begged Stalin himself to help them find their kin. The replies they received were formulaic: their relatives, they were told, had been sentenced to ten-year terms in labor camps "without the right to correspond."

The phrase was a code for the death sentence. Most of those who had lost the right to correspond were killed even before they reached the coal mines and lumber camps of the Far North. In Kiev, the NKVD shot them in the basement of its headquar-

MARCO CARYNNYK is a writer and researcher with a special interest in Ukrainian affairs. He is co-editor of *The Foreign Office and the Famine: British Documents on Ukraine and the Great Famine of 1932-1933* and editor of a similar volume of State Department documents, which will be published early in 1991. Mr. Carynnyk contributed "The Famine the *Times* Couldn't Find" to our November 1983 issue.

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ters or at the Lukianivka prison and buried them in the yards or in the city's cemeteries. When these filled up, it carted the corpses to the forest. "If you don't sign a confession," interrogators threatened obstinate prisoners, "you'll go down on Statute 23." There was no Statute 23 in the criminal code. The tram running from Kiev to Bykivnia was No. 23.

The convoys continued to bring their loads here until September 1941, when the Germans took Kiev. A day before the victorious Wehrmacht arrived, the people of Bykivnia watched mounted guards with police dogs goad columns of exhausted prisoners behind the fence and then heard gunfire crackle. In one column they glimpsed a prominent woman writer, a famous singer who had refused to be evacuated to the east, and a distinguished Orientalist. In another they saw soldiers, uniforms stripped of insignia and belts. In a third they spotted children with expressions of merciful incomprehension on their faces.

The day after Kiev's capture, villagers set out to search the enclosure. They found a four-room guardhouse stocked with food and alcohol. They saw that the trees had been cut down; rose willows were clambering over the sandy soil, and remnants of clothing were scattered about. When they delved two feet into the hillocks, their spades struck corpses and the sweet stench of death filled the air. The next day the village elder summoned a priest to conduct a service, and a German official ordered villagers to unearth the bodies in the presence of a photographer and witnesses.

In 1944, after the Red Army had retaken the region, a Soviet war-crimes commission concluded that the Nazis were responsible for the killings: a concentration camp where the Germans had executed 68,000 Soviet prisoners of war was located at Darnytsia, only three miles away.

After the war, when skulls began to protrude from the settling soil, grave robbers appeared. They riddled the ground with shafts, some six-feet deep, and supplied with improvised ladders, pulled victims from compressed piles of corpses with homemade hooks, and fingered the ears, mouths, and hands for earrings, gold teeth, and wedding bands. Bones lay scattered in the bushes. Bottles of vodka were stashed away. Once when a drunken ghoul killed a mate with a broken bottle, the authorities arrested him. Otherwise they left Bykivnia alone.

The thaw that swept the country after Nikita Khrushchev's cautious revelation of Stalin's atrocities in 1956 encouraged intellectuals to think that freedom—cultural, if not political—was finally at hand. In Kiev, the Writers Union set up a Creative Youth Club. Although the club would be disbanded in eighteen months, one dissident who knew the milieu wrote later that it produced "most of the leaders of the patriotic opposition in Kiev." Rumors about the corpses in the pine forest had been reaching the club, and in 1962 three members—the poet Vasyl Symonenko, the artist Alla Horska, and the theater director Les Taniuk—determined to investigate them.

Goats were grazing and boys were playing soccer on a soggy field when the three arrived at Bykivnia. "Look what the boys are playing with," Symonenko said when he came closer. He was pointing to a child's skull with two bullet holes in it. Then he waved a hand at the goal posts: children's skulls as well. Later, after Horska had gone off by herself to cry, he recited a quatrain that he had just composed:

> We trample underfoot our enemies and friends.
> O poor Yoricke, all in the same style!
> In the graveyard of executed illusions
> There is no room for graves

The poem is not very good—Symonenko was a journalist forced by censorship to versify his editorials—and in translation, bereft of rhyme and rhythm, it is even weaker, but the sentiment behind the poem led to a ban that still has not been lifted.

The club submitted a memorandum to the city authorities demanding that they put the graves in order and honor the dead with a monument. But Khrushchev's reforms ran into the sands. Writers who had been told to speak up were ordered to shut up when their criticism began to look dangerous; Khrushchev himself was sent into retirement; and the reply to the young artists was ominous: their memorandum was a provocation; they were acting as hirelings of foreign intelligence services. Within a year Taniuk was driven from Kiev, and Symonenko, who had been repeatedly beaten by unidentified assailants, was dead. In 1970, Horska was found with a shattered skull—killed, her friends concluded, by the KGB.

The scavenging continued unhindered until 1971, when the government formed a second war-crimes commission. Guards kept the curious away while soldiers with masked faces collected bones in boxes. When the soldiers left, the villagers found a plywood sign which announced that a monument to the victims of fascism would be erected here. A newspaper reported that the remains of 3,500 Soviet citizens who were savagely tortured to death had been discovered near Bykivnia.

In time, skulls surfaced from the sand again, and the grave robbers returned. One man, envious rumor had it, earned 25,000 rubles in several days. Mykola Lysenko, a retired economist who visited his in-laws in Bykivnia in 1987, was moved by the sight of bullet-riddled remains mixed with rotting remnants of clothes to make the graves a personal cause. He photographed the bones, recorded the testimony of ten witnesses, and implored the poet Ivan Drach to go to Bykivnia. Drach was the right man to approach. His parents had barely survived the famine, and he had written a poem about the atrocities of the 1930's in which

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he cursed history for first starving and then "feeding with silence the most silent people in the world."

Drach and the two writers who accompanied him, Lysenko would relate, groaned with horror when they saw thousands of skulls glinting in the sunlight. The party, to which the writers took Lysenko's evidence, responded more coolly: it formed yet another commission and appointed Major General Ivan Hladush, the Ukrainian republic's Minister of Internal Affairs, to head it. Security forces cordoned the site again for six months, and soldiers dug up bones and tossed them into a pit, then covered it with loam, planted grass, and erected a monument.

"Eternal Memory" was inscribed on the stone. Below, in smaller letters, was written: "Here are buried 6,329 Soviet soldiers, partisans, members of the underground, and peaceful civilians killed by the fascist invaders in 1941-1943." Local residents were not invited to the unveiling, which took place on May 9, the day the Soviet Union celebrates its victory over Nazi Germany. Instead, claqueurs were bused in from Kiev to watch a clutch of functionaries lay wreaths to the "Soviet patriots" buried here.

In July 1988, the people of Bykivnia assembled at the monument to denounce the commission's findings. The villagers were angry. They *knew* that they had seen the green fence before the war. That they had heard the trucks and the gunfire. That they had tasted with their tongues the blood that had puddled in the road. But Hladush had instructed the Ukrainian press to be silent. Only when Kiev intellectuals threatened to protest and Sergei Kiselev, a reporter for a Moscow literary paper, managed to publish a brief item in November 1988 did the government set up a fourth commission. Hladush took charge once again, and a public prosecutor named Viktor Kulyk headed the investigating unit.

Hladush, whose ministry is a direct descendant of the NKVD of the 1930's, was unwilling to overturn the previous commission's findings. Since there was "no documentary evidence" and "not one witness" to the shootings, he told a Kiev newspaper, he saw no reason to doubt the earlier conclusion that the Germans had interred Soviet POW's at Bykivnia.

KULYK rejected that theory. The method of burial at the Darnytsia concentration camp—in contrast to Bykivnia—was marked by the pedantry and rationalism of the SS, he concluded. All the bodies had been undressed; gold teeth had been removed; and some of the corpses showed signs of infectious diseases and exhaustion, which would have been possible only after prolonged confinement in a concentration camp. Nor did Kulyk believe that both Nazi and Soviet victims had been reburied in the same graves. His investigators questioned more than 250 witnesses, all of whom agreed that the Germans did not execute or bury anyone at Bykivnia.

Petro Kukovenko, one of the villagers who had excavated a grave in 1941, got up the courage to speak only after the third commission blamed the Nazis for the killings. "The Germans didn't shoot anyone or bring any corpses here," he told the investigators. "We would have seen and heard them. After all, we knew about Babi Yar! The corpses were brought before the war."

L.T. Husak worked as a signalman at the NKVD headquarters in Kiev. "From the window I saw trucks loaded to the top with corpses," he said. "They were covered with canvas, I think, to conceal the cargo. To prevent blood from flowing through the cracks, the bottoms of the trucks were also lined with canvas."

D. A. Makarenko drove a tram between Brovary and a suburb of Kiev in the late 1930's. "When I came back from Brovary at two o'clock in the morning," he recalled, "I often had to stop the tram to let NKVD columns go by. They consisted of three to six trucks draped with canvas with a car before and after them. They would turn off the highway into the forest. Everyone knew they were taking corpses behind the green fence."

A ninety-one-year-old villager told the commission that the fence was solidly built, without a single crack. "You'd be grazing your cow and the guards wouldn't let you come closer than twenty yards," I. I. Korytsky said. "Those guards could always get cigarettes at our shop without waiting in line. 'Why are you doing this?' we asked the clerk. 'They're shooting people, and I don't want them to do me in,' he replied."

Oleksander Kolosha was a teenage herder in 1941. "We often drove our herd to the edge of the Bykivnia forest," he remembered. "Once 25 to 30 men dressed in civilian clothes and armed with shotguns intercepted us and began to shoot rock salt at us. They caught several of us and told us never to come near the forest. One day we saw fresh red stains on the road. We touched and tasted them. They were blood. At first we thought that meat had been taken from the meat-packing plant to Kiev, but then we concluded from the way the blood had splattered that the transport had come from Kiev. Some five herders, myself included, followed the trail of blood. We soon realized that it led to the green fence."

A woman who lived near Bykivnia in the late 1930's told the commission that her neighbor Mykhailo Riaboshtan had worked as a truck driver. "My brother was younger than he was, but they were friends," Halyna Shamrai explained. "My brother said that he helped Riaboshtan wash away the blood on his truck at a pond. When my brother asked where the blood came from, Riaboshtan replied that he was driving corpses of enemies of the people to the vicinity of Bykivnia, where they

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were buried. They also washed the canvas with which the corpses were covered."

Antonina D.—she is still so afraid of reprisal that she will not reveal her surname—was one of the villagers mustered to exhume the graves when the Germans came. "They gave us spades and ordered us to go to the green fence," she recalled. "We were sure they would kill us. But when we got there the Germans made my father and me dig in two different places. We exhumed bodies. After a few pokes, I discovered the corpse of a young woman. She was pressing a child to her breast. Then the Germans told us to stop digging. They took a picture of us standing beside the bodies and left."

The commission determined that the area behind the fence had belonged to the NKVD. And it found inscribed watchcases, cigarette holders, and other personal effects that allowed it to identify several victims arrested in 1937-38. One unusual piece of evidence was a bundle of metal badges with the inscription "KOU NKVD," or "Kiev Regional Department of the NKVD."

"I'm of two minds about these badges," said Kulyk. "There's a 90-percent probability that they came to be in the burials accidentally, but there's a 10-percent probability that an NKVD employee deliberately used the badges as a signal to his distant descendants: when truth triumphs and you are investigating this crime, you must know what 'firm' was directly involved in it."

In March 1989, the epitaph on the monument that referred to the fascists was quietly sanded away: the commission had announced that it had discovered the bodies of 6,783 people who had been executed between 1936 and 1941. The people of Bykivnia refuse to accept the findings. The barrows have been only partially exhumed, they say, and the real figure is far higher. Makarenko believes that if the trucks that he saw contained twenty corpses each and if there were four trucks 300 days a year for five years, 120,000 people may have been buried at Bykivnia. Lysenko offers an even higher estimate. By pacing off the graves—36,000 square yards—and figuring that three corpses fit into 2.4 square yards and that the corpses are buried in five layers, he calculates that Bykivnia contains the remains of 225,000 victims.

And there may be graves that none of the commissions has examined. Valentyn Matiiash, who grew up in Bykivnia, says that his mother told him before she died four years ago that as early as 1930 the corpses of peasants who had been executed for refusing to join collective farms had been brought here. Their small burial mounds, she said, were scattered throughout the forest.

The ancient Slavs commemorated their ancestors at Whitsuntide. Late spring, they believed, is the time of the year when the dead emerge from the rivers and lakes to take up residence in the forests and fields. On May 7, 1989, Les Taniuk, recently returned to Kiev after twenty years' absence, led 12,000 people to a requiem at Bykivnia. The crowd was infuriated by reports that the government planned to cut down 3,000 acres of the forest to build a second train station for Kiev. Officials contended that the station would not affect the burial sites at Bykivnia or Darnytsia. Opponents replied that a dozen other sites were available. "Building a station on these bones," Sergei Kiselev said at the requiem, "would be just as immoral as those cases when graveyards were leveled and stadiums were put up."

Some of the mourners came to claim their dead. Motria Tovstenko, who lives on a nearby farmstead, could not hold back her tears. "My father is here," she said, pointing at the raked hillocks. "His brother Anton is here, too. They were both taken away one night in October 1937."

Tovstenko's cousins Hryhorii and Yakiv, her uncle Anton's sons, were also present. They had demanded an explanation about their father for fifty years, but learned only a year ago that he had been executed at Lukianivka in 1937. Although they were not told where he was buried, they knew that those who were shot at Lukianivka were brought here.

The late Andrei Sakharov sent a letter to be read at the requiem. It is important, he wrote, to know the whole truth not only about the victims who are buried at Bykivnia and in countless other places, but also about their killers. That is a guarantee that Stalinism will not return.

Countless other places. For Bykivnia is not unique, and reports of mass graves—in Dnepropetrovsk in southern Ukraine, Ivano-Frankivsk in the west, and Poltava and Vinnytsia in the east—have been cramming the Soviet press.

A plaque near Kirov Avenue in the center of the industrial city of Dnepropetrovsk announces that the Nazis executed Soviet citizens here in 1941-43. Semen Fisher, who was employed at a funeral home here in the 1930's, says the sign is a lie. Kirov Avenue had not been built yet, and in its place stood a stone wall. Beginning in 1933, several trucks would pull up to the wall at night twice a week. "Once I plucked up my courage and crawled to the wall in the dark," Fisher related. "What I saw was horrible. Dozens of corpses were being thrown into pits. The gravediggers from my funeral home were digging the pits and then filling them in." Fisher realized then why the gravediggers were often drunk: "They were given vodka every time they went out to do their dirty work so that they wouldn't complain."

Mykhailo Zbarakh related that he came across skeletons when he was digging ditches for water pipes along the avenue in 1963. He had seen trucks drive up to a vacant lot at night before the war

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and reported the discovery to his superiors. A retired military officer soon arrived. "He pulled out an old map and showed us where to drive in stakes. The result was a square, 30 yards on each side. When an excavator removed the top layer of soil, we saw six trenches, each 25 yards long, filled with corpses. The clothing indicated that all these people had been killed in 1940 or 1941, when I had witnessed the mysterious nightly arrivals of the trucks. An order was given, and the excavator drove into the pit and, mangling and tearing the corpses, shoveled them into dump trucks. The corpses were brought to the site of this monument, where a pit had been dug, thrown in as if they were garbage, and covered with soil."

Boris Pashkov was assigned an apartment in a building that was going up beside the monument in 1972. The tenants took turns helping the builders. "While they were digging the foundation pit," said Pashkov, "the excavator kept turning up broken bones. Dump trucks took them off to a garbage heap. Later the future tenants began to dig a ditch beside the building. We almost dropped our spades. Bones, skulls, and even whole skeletons were scattered throughout the soil to a depth of several yards. The hands of the skeletons were tied behind their backs with decaying pieces of cloth or barbed wire. Every skull had two holes—one in the forehead and one in the nape of the neck."

At a killing field that was discovered last September near the village of Pasichna, south of Ivano-Frankivsk in western Ukraine, 526 bodies in three graves have been exhumed, and more graves are waiting to be opened. Skulls with bullet holes are being piled in coffins. Documents showing that many of the victims were prisoners of the NKVD have been found.

A local newspaper described the scene when the graves were opened: "A pile of wet, half-rotted clothing out of which human bones fall. The old villagers of Pasichna are crying. The eyes of those present are filled with horror and pain. A toothbrush. An aluminum container. [The victims] were obviously told that they would be transported. A leg bone sticks out of a shoe. Buttons. Death. The military field engineers are deathly quiet. And the excavator is digging a new trench. The shovel brings up clothing and bones."

An interrogation record released by the authorities after mass graves were revealed in Poltava gives an account of how the NKVD conducted its executions. Pavlo Mazur had come from Poland in 1924, and though he took out Soviet citizenship and was a member of the party for ten years, he was arrested in August 1937 as a Polish spy. Four months later, he and nine other prisoners were summoned from their cells and driven to the NKVD headquarters, where they were placed in a basement cell. After two hours they were called out one by one. When it was Mazur's turn, guards escorted him to a room where four men were waiting.

"One of the four asked my name and why I had not told the investigator the truth," Mazur related later. "Then he ordered me to move away two steps and to get down on my knees, which I did, and fired a bullet into the back of my neck. I survived because the shot entered the left side of my neck. I lay beside other people who had been shot. We were loaded onto a truck and driven to a graveyard. I lay on the right side with two corpses on top of me. The pit was to the right of the truck, and to unload the corpses the right side was opened. When the corpses were being dumped I fell from the truck and rolled under it. Several minutes later I concluded that no one had noticed me and crawled to the rear axle of the truck, got up on it and held on to the spare tire."

When the truck drove back to the NKVD headquarters and the driver blew his horn for the gate to be opened, Mazur slipped off the axle and wandered about the city. After knocking on a door and obtaining clothes (he had been stripped to his underwear) and a cloth to bandage his wound (he explained that he had been attacked by bandits), he sought shelter with his sister in Donetsk. He was betrayed by a neighbor. Having rearrested and interrogated him, the local NKVD carried out the sentence again. The second bullet did not miss.

In Vinnytsia, 125 miles southwest of Kiev, a green fence was also put up in 1937. In 1943, the occupying Germans learned that there were graves behind the fence. In 1941, certain that they would win the war, they had said little about Bykivnia. Two years later, facing defeat and worried that their own killings might be discovered, they were eager to propagandize Bolshevik atrocities and summoned an international commission to study the 91 mass graves the people of the town had found.

The commission's 282-page report was illustrated with dozens of photographs, maps, and documents. Of the 9,435 victims, all of whom had been executed in the local NKVD prison in 1937-38, most of them with a bullet to the back of the neck, the report said, 169 were women. The majority of the men ranged in age from thirty to forty and had their hands tied behind their backs. Some had their feet bound as well. Of the female corpses, only a few elderly women were fully dressed; 49 were naked, and the rest were clad only in long shirts. This suggested that most of the women had been raped before being executed. Some of the victims had been gagged; still others had nooses around their necks. The shots had not all been fatal: 395 skulls had received severe blows. The earth in the throats and intestines of some of the victims suggested they had been buried alive, and one woman had given birth in the grave.

The Soviet government responded to the report

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precisely as it did when the graves of the Polish officers at Katyn were discovered: it blamed the atrocities on the Nazis and then lapsed into silence. In 1987, Vinnytsia residents started documenting the killings by collecting photographs, written evidence, and testimonies. But when the group tried to organize a commemorative meeting, city officials refused permission. Then in June 1989 Hryhorii Drobchak, a reporter for *Silski visti*, a popular agricultural newspaper, published a story. Several weeks later two other journalists brought forth evidence about the killings and asked the republic's public prosecutor to undertake an investigation.

The eyewitness accounts that the reporters produced confirmed the German findings and revealed the procedure of killing. "My father often worked at the garage of the Vinnytsia NKVD," a man named Lastovetsky recalled. "I helped him repair the cars and trucks. My father was allowed to work only until six o'clock in the evening, but as a boy I was allowed to stay until midnight or even later. When darkness came, gunshots rang out in the yard. No tractors were turned on to drown out the sound. People were simply forbidden to come close to the building. Trucks drove into the yard. They were filled with people, all of them kneeling in rows and facing the back. A heavy beam pressed the outer row against the others, so that no one could move, much less try to escape. The people were led out of the trucks, ordered to undress, and then taken into the car wash and shot."

"Each time," Lastovetsky continued, "seven or eight people were taken aside and not ordered to undress. They loaded the corpses onto the trucks, went with them for unloading, and then came back. They were given to understand that they had been spared and were ordered to go to their cells one by one, without a guard. They had to walk through a long corridor. A lamp hung from the ceiling in the middle, and a guard sat at a desk at the end. When a prisoner approached the lamp, the guard would order him to stop. To the right of this place was a boarded-up niche. An NKVD officer with a small-caliber rifle was standing there. He would shoot through a crack, right at the prisoner's temple."

Yurii Badzio, a historian and former political prisoner, calls this slaughter a war. "Stalinism destroyed our achievements of the 1920's," he says. "The intelligentsia was destroyed, our culture was trampled on, seven to ten million people fell victim to the famine of 1932-33, three million were deported and tortured. This was a war, a terrible war against our people."

A WAR against the people. Wilted flowers, candle stubs, and a mud-soaked embroidered cloth are lying on top of the granite slab: mourners held a requiem here a few days ago. Streaks of rain water stain the stone on either side of the inscription. Inverted, they would look like a bull's horns.

I set off along the track into the forest. What do I hope to find? Buttons? Bones? Signs of excavations? Traces of the graves that have not been identified yet? German soldiers demolished the guardhouse; villagers tore down the fence to patch their cottages and sheds; Soviet soldiers combed the barrows clean. The forest is mute except for a muffled roar from the distant highway.

Bykivnia. "Place of the bulls." Cattle have been bred here since they were domesticated 4,000 years ago, and the cult of the bull that was celebrated from Spain to Crete, Sumeria, and India in the Stone Age had its worshippers on the banks of the Dnieper as well: one of the chief deities of the pagan Slavs was Volos, "the hairy one," god of cattle, fertility, and wealth.

An olive-green truck, the back covered with a tarpaulin, appears from behind the trees. I was warned when I was coming here to watch out for the militia. Did they see me drive off the highway and come to get me? I turn around and head for the car, trying to walk fast and yet look indifferent, hoping that my major will protect me. The truck lumbers up behind me; I step to the side of the path; the truck rumbles on.

The Greeks tell the story of the Minotaur, the bull-headed monster who was confined in the famous labyrinth on Crete. The Cretan ruler Minos had reduced Athens to the position of a tributary state, and every year the Athenians sent fourteen young men and women to be devoured by the Minotaur.

I pick up a piece of crushed white rock as a keepsake. After a week of rain the soft ground is bright with poisonous mushrooms. They grow so profusely here, the superstitious say, because they feed on the blood of the dead.

The Athenian hero Theseus, the story continues, offered himself as a sacrifice. Minos's daughter Ariadne fell in love with him and revealed the secret that would allow him to escape death: a ball of thread that he was to fasten to the door and unwind as he went on.

A one-legged young woman swings by on crutches, a satchel with a loaf of bread and a head of cabbage in one hand, a girl of three or four clinging to the other. They do not answer—do not even look at me—when I say hello.

Theseus came upon the Minotaur asleep in the maze and killed him with his bare hands, then followed the thread back to the entrance and fled from Crete. Once the Minotaur was dead, the Athenians no longer had to pay tribute to Minos and with Theseus as their king established a just society.

A JUST society. This history of horrors is also the politics of the present: with the exception of the 1933 famine, no issue

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goes to the heart of relations between Moscow and Ukraine as deeply as the massacres of which Bykivnia has become an emblem. An open letter from five intellectuals, one of them Les Taniuk, that appeared in a Kiev newspaper last February suggests that the mass graves have become a point of national honor for Ukrainians. The mourners at the meeting at Bykivnia in May 1989 had passed a hat, the five wrote, and had collected 30 rubles—all in one- and two-kopeck coins—so that Lazar Kaganovich could travel from his cozy apartment on the Frunze Embankment in Moscow to Bykivnia to testify about the killings there.

Why such generosity toward Kaganovich? The letter gave the answer: a trusted member of Stalin's inner circle, he was one of the organizers of "an unprecedented genocide—the carefully planned murder of seven to nine million Ukrainian peasants during the famine of 1932-33"; ruthless in the face of anything that looked to him like Ukrainian nationalism, he was responsible for the death of a whole generation of intellectuals.

Kaganovich's biographers support that verdict. He is a man, writes the historian Roy Medvedev, "on whose conscience there are quite as many crimes as there were on the consciences of those who were hanged in 1946 at Nuremberg." Kaganovich, says Stuart Kahan, author of *The Wolf of the Kremlin*, "urged and orchestrated the deaths of 20 million people."

And yet, why *only* Kaganovich?, I found myself asking when I had read the letter. "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely," Lord Acton said. But he went on to observe that "the greatest crime is homicide. The accomplice is no better than the assassin." Yes, Kaganovich adorned execution orders with his signature (36,000 have been found), he had a hand in the killing of millions, but what about the men who scrubbed and fueled the trucks, fondled and fed the police dogs, sprinkled the quicklime, positioned the muzzles in the napes of the victims' necks? Or the officials in the security services who have obstructed justice for so long?

And what about criminal prosecution? Four Bykivnia commissions in forty-odd years and no one has been charged. When reporters asked the fourth commission whether any of the people responsible for the killings were still working for the KGB, the answer was flat: no, they were not. Satisfied, none of the journalists asked whether retired officials would be indicted. Mikhail Gorbachev's *glasnost* allows the crime to be named, but not the assassins or their accomplices. Is Kaganovich, who is now ninety-six years old and will probably never stand in the dock, being offered up as a scapegoat (his Jewish ancestry is no secret) so that younger malfeasants can live out their lives on easy pensions?

I WALK back to the monument in the truck's muddy ruts. The rain starts again as I take a last picture and get in the car. As we pass the armed militiamen on our way back to the city, I remark to the major that the inscription on the stone is fitting.

"Yes," he says, then smiles wanly as if he knows something. "It allows everyone to fill in the missing words as he will."

Speechless, I rummage in my bag for the solace of a bit of food. As we chew handfuls of raisins, I think about the people who traveled this road fifty years ago. And about the remark I have heard in Kiev: more than 100,000 unmarked mass graves are scattered across the Soviet Union; the entire country is built on bones.

I turn to the major. Haven't you been fed with silence long enough?, I say. Aren't you abdicating your right to hold your government accountable by not demanding that the killers be brought to justice?

Now it is his turn to be dumbstruck.

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Who, Really, Was Bruno Bettelheim?

Ronald Angres

WHEN a famous man dies and is eulogized, those who knew him often feel a shock of non-recognition. Such was the case for me last March in reading the notices on the death by suicide, at age eighty-six, of the renowned psychoanalyst, author, and educator Bruno Bettelheim. In these notices and elsewhere Bettelheim, who was born in Vienna and came to the United States in 1939, has been widely mourned as a paragon both of insight and of compassion; but to me, in the twelve years I spent as his student/patient, he was a bully, a tormentor, and a liar.

I was seven years old when my parents brought me to the Orthogenic School in Chicago, the residential center Bettelheim founded in 1944 as a "total therapeutic milieu" for the treatment of "between 30 and 50 autistic, withdrawn, anorexic, severely neurotic or suicidal children" (as the Washington *Post* obituary put it). My father, a psychoanalyst, considered me imbalanced, morbid, "disturbed." For one thing, I paced up and down a great deal. (I still do.) Sometimes I paced with my hands clasped behind my back, "like an old man" (surely in imitation of my foreign-born father). I also twiddled my fingers in what looked like a nervous tic. Sometimes I skipped while I paced. I had other unacceptable mannerisms, too: I sometimes talked to myself, lips moving, when lost in thought.

In my parents' search for a "cure" they were drawn to Bettelheim's words and ideas. (My father could not "cure" me because he lacked professional distance.) They knew the Orthogenic School's reputation for indulging kids with unlimited amounts of good food and candy, for its spacious play areas, for the contemporary paintings and sculpture that adorned the buildings and grounds. And they possessed the necessary financial means.

The case for admitting me was built on assertions about my internal state. The initial verdict was "obliviousness," or not paying attention to the world around me. I often "dreamed off." Furthermore, I mispronounced sounds, especially "th," and that not even consistently but sometimes as "z" (like my father, born abroad in one country) and sometimes as "d" (like my mother, born abroad in another). Finally, I had not yet learned to read. Bettelheim diagnosed me as autistic, and thus began our twelve-year relationship.

I still remember the shock of my first meeting with Bettelheim. I do not know whether or not he treated me the same way he did every child who came to him, but he certainly did not abide by his own oft-proclaimed dictum that every child had to see the Orthogenic School for himself and consent to go there. I neither saw the place nor consented to go there. I did not want to leave home anyway, and after meeting him, I would have preferred a stay in the Arctic to any place run by that man. If I had known I would spend all the years of my childhood and youth with him I would have been utterly shattered.

I drew for him a picture of a man. I don't remember now if he asked me to, but all psychologists seemed to crave such pictures, and I may have tried in this fashion to break the ice. "What a stupid and ugly picture," he snapped. (I did not yet know that he fancied himself an art connoisseur.) "You did not draw his hands!" "They're behind his back," I explained. "You just did that because you can't draw hands! Do you know what it means when a boy can't draw hands?" I did not. I still don't.

To appease him, I redrew the picture and added some hands, carefully showing all five fingers. "Preposterous! You drew the hands entirely out of proportion! They're bigger than his head!" Once more he scowled darkly, as if I were expected to know the sinister significance of such a reversal of normal proportions.

He asked what I hoped to become when I grew up. A scientist, I replied. "Ridiculous!" he spat. "You want to be a scientist? You can't even read." "You're rude," I bristled. "I never met such a rude man." I stormed out of the room and repeated this complaint to my parents. To them, it was irrelevant, and irrelevant it remained to them for at least the next twelve years.

For all of those years, they too endured his insulting and intimidating theatrics. But from his behavior they never drew the obvious conclusion about his character, nor did they ever pause to consider how he must be treating those whom he

RONALD ANGRES, here making his first appearance in COMMENTARY, is a graduate student in international affairs at George Washington University.

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had totally in his power. It did not seem to occur to them that in his "total therapeutic milieu," the professional distance they sought had been delegated to people who raised us, educated us, disciplined us, and controlled us far more completely than any parent—*and* kept our real parents in the dark. Indeed, Bettelheim's constant verbal abuse of the parents with whom he dealt, and whom he refused to allow past the visitors' area—combined with his well-publicized assertion that it was parents who caused mental illness in their children—systematically destroyed their will to stand up for themselves or their children.

When I first entered the school I was allowed to bring some possessions, but Bettelheim made sure that I did not feel at home. On his order, my comic books were confiscated, and a new rule was promulgated that no child could have or read such works. As I unpacked, he glowered at my things. My wooden train caught his eye. Although it did not run on tracks or under power, each car featured an animal head that fit into a hole in the next car, above the curved axle for the wheels. Thus, as the train moved, the heads bobbed up and down. It was new, and I found it fascinating, and said so. "It's a stupid toy," he replied. The school had no policy against stupidity in toys, nor did he have some special squeamishness on the point—rather, I learned as the years passed, he insulted people just in order to break any self-confidence they might have.

In time, he broke mine very thoroughly. I came to experience a side of the school that Bettelheim's reputation obscured: the restrictions placed on our non-physical desires; the insistence on locating psychosomatic origins for our physical ailments before seeking medical advice; the smell of urine pervading the dorms of younger children, emanating from the bathroom and sometimes from a bed because, it was held, overassiduous housecleaning would betray a middle-class obsession with hygiene.

Above all, though Bettelheim routinely proclaimed in print and speech that no one should *ever* use corporal punishment on children, he himself just as routinely administered it. And so I lived for years in terror of his beatings, in terror of his footsteps in the dorms—in abject, animal terror. I never knew when he would hit me, or for what, or how savagely. For Bettelheim prized his upredictability, no less than his unconventionality: as someone who saw into the secret depths of men's souls, he gloried in defying ordinary notions of which offenses were important, or even what constituted an offense. "What a hostile character!" he would say of me, and countless other boys, as he beat us publicly. These beatings, which made the greatest impression on me of anything that I have known in life, stick in my memory as grand performances of exultant rage.

A typical example. Once some all-school games were organized. We played musical chairs. A boy I shall call Seymour jumped into a seat before I could, and from then until the end of the game, which I had to watch from the sidelines, he silently taunted me, smirking and wiggling his behind in time to the music, with bumps in my direction. After the game finished, Seymour approached me with that gloating smirk still on his face. I said, "I wish I could chop your head off." The counselor promptly told Bettelheim, who just as promptly beat me, adding neck chops to his standard slaps, and a denunciatory monologue in case I missed the poetic justice of it all. The counselor interjected, "Seymour behaved rather provocatively." "Of course!" Bettelheim answered, never at a loss for words.

Bettelheim controlled the whole system and the staff followed along, many doting on his every word. When some bright staffer suggested that Bettelheim honor us with a weekly lecture on his thoughts concerning history, art, religion, philosophy, he gladly acceded. The content of these compulsory lectures, which were delivered in his highly Teutonic accent and academic style, was for the most part derivative of clichés popular with the educated middle classes in interwar Vienna. Thus, he informed us that Western law is irrational because it punishes assault and battery more harshly than it does traffic accidents; that our civilization properly derives from the Greeks, who believed in a "sound mind and a sound body," and that Christianity is therefore essentially alien to the West; that Christianity nevertheless represents an advance over Judaism, "the religion of a desert people," as it is more universal and humanitarian; but that more advanced yet is the modern realization that God is merely a projection onto an imaginary being of our own best human qualities. (Bettelheim took the Freudian line that religion is an illusion and would not allow us to attend church or synagogue.)

Although he was opinionated about everything, even a child could see that he had not given careful thought to these subjects. Mostly his lectures served as still further occasions for calling attention to the inadequacies of particular children in his care, which he seized on to illustrate his "ideas." As for the staffers, they seemed happy to accept it all, just as they accepted his lack of restraint in treating the children themselves.

This puts me in mind of another incident. When we came down to meals, we had to sit on a bench outside the dining hall before a counselor would lead us in. As the bench was normally quite crowded, sometimes I would sit in an armchair just inside an adjacent room, to steal a few moments of darkened serenity before the glare and din of the meals. One day, Bettelheim found me there and dragged me back to the bench by the hair. "Do you know what they call people like you?" he thundered. "A megalomaniac!" Later,

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when our group returned to the dorm, the counselor harried me to find the word in the dictionary: "Don't you want to know what he called you?" I did not. With perfect zeal, she made me look it up anyway. Supposedly, as with the other terms they freely hurled at us—narcissistic, paranoid, anal-retentive, obsessive, psychopathic—no moral blame was to be inferred since the terms themselves were "scientific," value-free. Thus did they force us to pour out with our own hands the salt they proceeded to rub in our wounds.

EVEN after I learned to read, the atmosphere in the school allowed me no peace. My senior counselor would scold me for reading too much, for "shutting out the world."

While I did learn to read, however, I never learned to write well enough to produce a coherent essay of any length, on any subject. I feared expressing myself. I had reason to. School papers became grist for further dissection of our characters, and were thrown back in our faces with accusations about our motives and the "symptoms" that were supposedly revealed by our ideas. Writing even a factual essay was risky; writing fiction was downright reckless. Grammar itself became fair game for psychologizing/moralizing: "It's 'he and I,' not 'me and him,' but then, you always think of 'me' first."

The school stifled my extracurricular development far more extensively than it did my academic development. We were not to be diverted from the task of "understanding" our "problems" by concentrating on achieving excellence in debate, games, or any of the arts. Sports, too, were in general kept to a minimum, for two additional reasons: to prevent us from competing, and to prevent the possibility of physical accidents. Though we played with tennis balls and plastic bats, Bettelheim and most of the women counselors reacted with extreme ferocity to any mishap. The school particularly disliked team sports—because, I think, team members prod each other to play harder, and also because they tend to form independent loyalties and hierarchies.

My physical awkwardness was another mark against me. At age nine, I joined a baseball team that some of the kids were trying to organize. I put my all into improving my skills. But I kept running into the institutional obsession with accidents. Every ball that hit a child was regarded as an intentional assault, requiring punishment. Needless to say, the intent did not have to be "conscious." Though most of us were clumsy, if not "spastic," our "unconscious" was credited with superhuman skill and with the single determination to bean other kids with tennis balls.

In time I grew discouraged. They kept us from forming teams, from keeping score, from deciding with whom we would play, and from playing without the threat of punishment hanging over us.

Years passed. After they moved me to the older boys' dorm I tried to take up sports again. The counselor let us play catch in the gym. I caught and threw to George, who stood across the gym. One throw was high and wide. George jumped several feet off the ground; though he just missed snagging the ball with his mitt, by a fluke the ball hit his head as it ricocheted off the corner of the high gym window. George behaved well, but the counselor decided to make an issue of it. He called off the game, took us back to the dorm, and collected us around the group table to await Bettelheim. When he arrived I tried, in a tremulous voice, to explain what had happened, but he cut me off with a slap in the face and continued to slap while he cut me down with words. Then he left, once more triumphant, I once more in tears.

Throughout my years at the school, my parents saw me improving; I felt myself deteriorating. The school left me with little ambition of any kind. "I'll wait," I told myself. "I'll try to make up for it when I finally get out." But I was counting on a nine-year limit and they kept me for twelve, almost until I was twenty.

WHO, REALLY, was Bruno Bettelheim? About that, the memorial articles provide surprisingly sparse and contradictory information. Bettelheim refused to write an autobiography, on the grounds that Freud's strictures on biographers applied even more to autobiographers: they were prone "to lying, to concealment, to flummery." Those words appear in the introduction to *Freud's Vienna and Other Essays*—Bettelheim's last book, and the one most centered on his own life.

That he was born (in 1903) to middle-class Jewish parents in Vienna; that the Nazis arrested him within a year of the 1938 *Anschluss* and sent him to Dachau and Buchenwald; and that he was released after a year and came to the U.S. as a political refugee—all this is known. But on certain crucial questions accounts differ. Some sources, for instance, state that Bettelheim was arrested because of his Jewish origins. Bettelheim himself, however, always maintained that the Nazis arrested him because of his activities in the Austrian underground.

Bettelheim recounts that in the spring of 1917, at the age of thirteen, he joined the *Jung Wandervogel*, which he describes as a radical Viennese youth movement, pacifist and socialist in orientation. About the same time, he became a believer in the educational reforms instituted by Gustav Wyneken in the *Freie Schulgemeinde* (Free School Community) at Wickersdorf, Germany. Bettelheim subscribed to Wyneken's magazine *Anfang* ("Beginning") and discussed its ideas with friends in the *Jung Wandervogel*. These ideas formed the basis for the educational program he would put into practice in America at the Orthogenic School.

The character of the ideas themselves becomes

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clearer in Bettelheim's account (in *Children of the Dream*) of the influence of the *Wandervogel* upon the kibbutz movement in Jewish Palestine.

> . . . The *Wandervogel* movement was a revolt against the authoritarian family in which these essentially middle-class youths had been raised, against the authoritarian schooling of the German *Gymnasium* most of them had attended. What they sought was a more authentic, more nature-bound way of life.
>
> All these ideas appealed to Jewish ghetto youth who rebelled at the even more binding traditions their parents lived by, and a system of religious education that was vastly more oppressive than any German school.

As a reference here Bettelheim cites Walter Laqueur's *Young Germany: A History of the German Youth Movement* (1962). But in that book Laqueur reveals that the Free School was not without its problems. Wyneken could never cooperate with his colleagues, and though he preached a system of collective control by students and faculty, in practice—shades of the Bettelheim future—he never tolerated the least opposition.

Wandervogel ideology remained influential with Bettelheim, though he came to regard the "educational reform philosophy of Wyneken" as trite "compared with the much more penetrating one of Dewey." In any case, while in Vienna Bettelheim was concurrently occupied with his academic training in philosophy and art history, writing a dissertation that drew on the psychological ideas of Freud and the aesthetic ideas of Kant. In 1929 he began to undergo psychoanalysis with Dr. Richard Sterba. Sterba's wife was one of the first child analysts. Bettelheim claims that he first became interested in curing disturbed children while sharing a waiting room with one of Mrs. Sterba's patients, a small "psychotic" he calls Johnny. In *Freud's Vienna* Bettelheim devotes several pages to the implications of a statement by Johnny on the one occasion he, Bettelheim, succeeded in getting the boy to respond in a complete sentence.

A year later, Bettelheim himself took on an "autistic" girl, the daughter of a "prominent and wealthy New York family" (in the words of the Washington *Post* obituary). The fee from the child's parents must have enabled him to complete his psychoanalysis, as well as to begin and complete a doctorate in a new subject, psychology, within six years. The *Post* explains that although he was a businessman at the time, Bettelheim took the child because Anna Freud recommended him to the parents as a member of the Vienna "psychoanalytic circle." It seems that Bettelheim was the last in a chain of four recommendations: Jean Piaget had said that he did not work with ill children and recommended Freud; Freud said that he did not work with children and recommended his daughter Anna; Anna said that she did not work with children who were *that* ill, and recommended Bettelheim.

If true, this story prefigures a means by which Bettelheim would later gain immunity from criticism of his Orthogenic School: it became the last hope for children no one else would accept. Or at least so their parents believed. Connected with this, too, was Bettelheim's habit of making a mystique both out of autism itself—he rediagnosed as autistic many children sent to the Orthogenic School on other grounds—and out of his claims to cure the disease in most cases. So awed were people by Bettelheim's willingness to deal with such children in the first place, and then by his supposedly high success rate, that few were disposed to question his diagnoses or his results.

As for Bettelheim's original "autistic" girl, whatever he did or did not do for her (according to the *Post*, she was helped but not cured), her parents saved Bettelheim when he fell into the Nazi net in the late 30's by appealing successfully to New York's governor, Herbert Lehman, and to Eleanor Roosevelt to intercede. Once in the United States, Bettelheim achieved his first public notice, and some notoriety, in October 1943 when he published an essay based on his experience in Nazi internment camps and titled "Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations." After the war the article became required reading for all U.S. military-government officers in Europe. It was also quite controversial, especially within the Jewish community, for reasons alluded to obliquely in the New York *Times* obituary last March:

> Dr. Bettelheim's first work, in which he described the disintegration of dignity and personality in the Nazi concentration camps, was criticized as well as widely read for its insights. "It was his first impact on the intellectual world, but many Jews were offended because he felt that to some degree the Jews provoked some of the actions of the Nazis," said Dr. [Peter] Blos.

In articles and speeches after the war, Bettelheim continued to work this theme, of the identification and hence the complicity of victims with their aggressors. Structurally speaking, his implied attack on the behavior of European Jews during the Holocaust would resemble his later explicit attacks on parents for causing mental illness in children. The Chicago *Tribune* quotes the psychologist David Gutmann on this point, revealingly:

> Not all of Bettelheim's theories have stood the test of time. For example, he said parents were largely responsible for autism, a belief that hardly anyone in the field subscribes to today.
>
> "There's now evidence that the disease may be at least partially neurological," Gutmann

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said. "He was sort of blaming the victim. There are a hell of a lot of well-meaning parents who have found themselves with autistic kids."

In fact, there was *always* evidence that autism "may be at least partially neurological." Everyone before Bettelheim believed that it was. No one but Bettelheim and his most fervent followers ever believed otherwise. And even on Bettelheim's assumption that the origins were psychological rather than biological or neurological, why go on, as he did, to accuse parents of such crimes—such "schizophrenogenic symptoms"—as wishing that their child did not exist? Bettelheim made an art of accusation. He did not "sort of" blame victims, as Gutmann puts it; he set himself up as their special prosecutor.

To be sure, he made a therapeutic doctrine out of all this, and a very subtle and sophisticated one. Bettelheim did not leave it to potential detractors to note that the term "total institution" applied as much to his school as it did to a concentration camp, but in his scheme of things he would be, of course, not the all-powerful persecutor but the all-powerful protector, and the syndrome of "identification with the aggressor" would become, by a dialectical process of inversion, a means of salvation and cure. As he formulated his paradoxical insight in *The Empty Fortress*:

> I had experienced being at the mercy of forces that seemed beyond one's ability to influence, and with no knowledge of whether or when the experience would end . . . of living isolated from family and friends, of being severely restricted in the sending and receiving of information.
>
> . . . Perhaps this sudden reversal helped me first to understand how the camps could destroy personality, and later to resume, with I hope greater insight and empathy, my earlier task: that of creating a milieu which would favor the reconstruction of personality.

Many who have discussed Bettelheim's concentration-camp experiences have resorted to similar language:

> "He told me that once you were in a camp, you could never escape the cruelty," said Rudolph Eckstein, a psychoanalyst in Los Angeles and a close friend. "He turned it upside down when he started his school for disturbed children. It was a protected, caring environment, the mirror opposite of the camps. The door was locked to the outside, but always open from the inside." [New York *Times*, March 13, 1990]

But I do not believe that Bettelheim first learned either his manner or his methods from the SS in the camps. In 1938 he was, after all, an adult who had already studied educational theories and had taken in an "autistic" child, so he must have had established ideas and habits. As for the idea of turning experience "upside down," it has long been a staple of radical and dialectical thinking.

Both Bettelheim and the people who admired and supported him were possessed by a dream, a dream of all the wonderful things they could do for mankind if only they had the power. In their view, a true humanitarian could perhaps learn from the concentration-camp experience a valuable lesson about techniques for reforming mankind. But no one had to go to the Nazis for the *idea* of a system of total control. The intellectual and political worlds of our century have bubbled over with such schemes. The real question in Bettelheim's case is why his experience in the camps did not sour him on such ideas once and for all.

And there is another question. Many people knew that Bettelheim beat children. Everyone who worked at the Orthogenic School knew. His beatings, after all, were usually performed in front of staff members and, almost as often, in front of classmates or dorm mates. Yet those who observed these scenes for the most part kept silent.

So have his latter-day hagiographers. An article in the Chicago *Tribune* on March 15 of this year conceded that Bettelheim did not "coddle the children" at his school, and that he sometimes shouted at them that they were "crazy-insane." But according to the *Tribune*, this was the only practice of his which "would shock modern psychiatrists." In fact, however, that Bettelheim dealt out arbitrary punishments of the kind I have described was widely known, and was confirmed at least as early as 1983 by Jacqueline Sanders, his successor as director. Dr. Sanders was responding to *The Pelican and After*, a fictionalized account of the Orthogenic School by a "graduate," Tom Wallace Lyons. This past April, moreover, in an anonymous letter to the *Reader*, Chicago's free weekly newspaper, another "graduate" of the school testified that Bettelheim once beat her for saying the school had too many restrictions, and that on another occasion he dragged her naked from the shower and beat her in front of her dorm mates. And in August, in a piece in the Washington *Post*, another "graduate," Charles Pekow, offered testimony similar to my own.

So to the scandal of terror spread by Bruno Bettelheim in his school another scandal needs to be added: the fact that so many people who knew about the terror went to such lengths to cover up for him—and, to judge by the mostly adoring accounts that have appeared in the press after his death, that they are still willing to do so.

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Germany's Worst Enemy

Emil L. Fackenheim

1.

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." I have always doubted this much-quoted dictum by the philosopher George Santayana. When does history ever repeat itself? Now, however, when I think about Germany, I have misgivings. True, the world *has* learned from the German past. Yet is it possible that now, forty-five years after the end of World War II, history might repeat itself nevertheless? Where Germany is concerned, only three things are certain: reunification is an accomplished fact; the country is at a monumental crossroads; and the way it goes will have a huge effect on the world. Still quite uncertain, to me at any rate, is where Germany will go.

2.

> The longing for the Middle Ages began in Germany at the very moment when the actual Middle Ages—the Holy Roman Empire ruled by a German—came to an end in what was then thought to be the moment of Germany's deepest humiliation. In Germany, and there alone, did the end of the Middle Ages coincide with the beginning of the longing for the Middle Ages.

This passage, which provokes even more thought today than when it was published in 1962, was written by the late Leo Strauss, a Jewish philosopher of German origin who had reason to reflect deeply on Germany. The passage may be glossed as follows. In 1806, Napoleon defeated the Prussian army at Jena, and then tried to bring Prussia and other conquered German states into the modern world. This was the "humiliation." As for the "longing," it took a variety of forms. France became, for Germans, the *Erbfeind* (hereditary enemy), and "holiness" came to be ascribed not only to the river Rhine—which the *Erbfeind* was ever greedy to rape—but also to Germany itself, widely referred to in song and poetry as a virgin without blemish. Indeed, such was Germany's purity as to endow it with a mission for all humanity. This *Volk* was not merely one among others—other Europeans, that is, for Asians, Africans, Americans did not count at all—but rather the *Urvolk*, alone endowed with a language uncontaminated by alien (i.e., Latin) elements. The *Urvolk* was what Germany had once been, and the *Urvolk* it was destined to become again, if necessary through the agency of a *"Zwingherr zur Deutschheit"* (a master forcing Germans into Germanness).

This, and much more, was proclaimed to rapt German audiences by the philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte. In 1806 Fichte had fled from French-occupied Berlin to unoccupied Koenigsberg: the shame of living in the shadow of French bayonets was more than he could endure. Yet with a boldness none could fail to admire, he returned to Berlin in 1808 to deliver his *Addresses to the German Nation*. The French occupiers would have been wise to take notice, for the *Addresses* were to reverberate well into the 20th century.

In just two years, Fichte announced, world history had made gigantic strides. What had divided Germans for so long was now to be cast aside, was being cast aside. A recovery was taking place, a recovery of an age-old "German essence," of German unity, of the German soul. In the heady years following, more and more poets, journalists, professors, and students were to speak, write, and sing in this vein.

If I treat Fichte as though he singlehandedly created modern German nationalism, it is because he was one of Germany's few truly great philosophers: next only to Immanuel Kant, he initiated the golden age of German philosophy. But I would not wish to ignore lesser philosophers, writing in a coarser vein. Of these I have in mind in particular Jacob Friess—no major thinker but, after all, a professor at Heidelberg and a Kantian of sorts. Friess was present at the 1817 student festival at the Wartburg, Luther's famous stronghold. It was a remarkable event, noted for expressions of hatred of the French, and of the sentiment

Emil L. Fackenheim, the distinguished theologian and philosopher, lives in Jerusalem. He is the author of, among other works, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought* (1968), *Encounters Between Judaism and Modern Philosophy* (1973), and *What Is Judaism?* (1988). His new book, *The Jewish Bible After the Holocaust: A Re-reading*, will be published by Indiana University Press in the spring of 1991.

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that murder was no crime so long as it was committed for the sake of the *Vaterland.* A book was burned at the Wartburg festival which had dared to suggest that Germans were not the only Christians in the world. And coming in for more than their share of calumny were the Jews.

This brings me to a second passage from Leo Strauss, occurring a page or so later than the one I quoted earlier:

> The action most characteristic of the Middle Ages is the Crusades; it may be said to have culminated not accidentally in the murder of whole Jewish communities.

The Middle Ages for which the Germans of the 19th century longed, in other words, were inseparably, and in Strauss's view necessarily, identified with the hatred of Jews. And the "humiliation" visited upon Germany by Napoleon was similarly and reciprocally identified with the emancipation of the Jews brought about by his writ and his armies. Such were the ominous beginnings of modern Jewish history in Germany.

Jacob Friess saw the connection clearly. In a pamphlet read aloud in taverns by beery voices, Friess declared that popular hatred of Jews, far from being a blameworthy phenomenon, should be encouraged and fomented—and he went on to foment it, climactically calling for nothing less than an *Ausrottung* (extermination) of the Jews. To my knowledge, he was the first occupant of a chair in a modern university to articulate this particular demand. He was, of course, not the last.

Presumably it was not so much Friess's hatred of Jews as his rabble-rousing *Deutschheit* that caused the reactionary Prussian authorities to ban his pamphlet and dismiss him from his post at Heidelberg. As it happens, the great philosopher Hegel, fearful of German nationalism *à la* Friess and his kind, voiced his support for this action by the government. But what about Fichte? When it came to the Jews, this noble figure, for whom morality was the supreme principle of philosophy, did not much differ from the coarse Friess. As early as 1793 he had expressed his alarm at the French Revolution and the ensuing emancipation of the Jews. There could be, he wrote, no true emancipation of the Jews unless their heads were cut off and replaced with new ones, "in which not a single Jewish idea remained."

3.

Consider now some subsequent effects of the German longing for the Middle Ages, and of Fichte's idea of the *Urvolk.* At the time of World War I, a great many Germans believed themselves encircled by a *Welt von Feinden* (a world of enemies); and even as their armies marched into neutral Belgium, these Germans recited the 19th-century dictum, "*am deutschen Wesen soll die Welt genesen*" (the world shall be healed through the German essence). Indeed, in 1917 Kaiser Wilhelm himself, assuming the mantle of the philosopher, declared that this was a war not merely between nations or states but between philosophies—in particular, between the commerce-minded materialism of the Anglo-Saxons and the idealism of the Germans.

The longing for the Middle Ages did not end with Germany's defeat in World War I. Martin Heidegger, Germany's greatest philosopher at the time, declared in the 1930's that Communist Russia and capitalist America, "metaphysically considered," offered the "same desolate frenzy [*Raserei*] of a rootless and groundless organization of mediocre humanity." "In the pincers between these two," he went on, lay Germany, the "metaphysical *Volk par excellence.*" This Heidegger said in Hitler's Germany of 1935. Six years later his Fuehrer expressed Germany's "metaphysical essence" by invading Russia in Operation Barbarossa. The code name was not accidental. Friedrich Barbarossa (ca. 1483-1546) had been the German under whom the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation had enjoyed its largest expansion.

4.

Such were the thoughts that came to my mind when, on a cold November day in 1984, I stood at the Berlin Wall. Like Leo Strauss I am a Jewish philosopher of German origin; but that day, returning to the Berlin from which I had fled forty-five years earlier, I could not help feeling like the German I had once been. And so feeling, I came face to face with the contemporary German tragedy.

On "their" side of the Wall was the Brandenburg Gate, symbol not only of Prussia but of Hegel, Germany's greatest philosopher. On "our" side was the Reichstag, symbol not only of Germany but also of Bismarck, the statesman who had tried once and for all to end the fatal longing for the Middle Ages, and thus to save Germany from itself. This he tried to do through the *Ausschluss* (disjoining) of Austria, accomplished in the 1866 Prusso-Austrian war. That Bismarck's "small" Reich, founded in 1871, would succeed only in part became clear a few years later when a new wave of anti-Semitism swept both Germany and Austria. However, it was only with the forcible rejoining (*Anschluss*) of Austria in 1938, through the agency of an Austrian who had previously conquered Germany politically, that modern Germany's fate may be said to have been sealed.

And not, of course, the fate of Germany alone. Hegel had formulated a philosophy that reconciled right with might but had been confined in its scope to Prussia. Then came the Reich of Bismarck, the "iron chancellor," based, to be sure,

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on might, but also justly priding itself on being a *Rechtsstaat*, a state of right. Bismarck's work was destroyed by the Kaiser; the Weimar Republic, which arose after World War I, offered right without might or, in Strauss's words, "the sorry spectacle of justice without the sword, or unwilling to use the sword." And this in turn was succeeded by a regime that not only destroyed right by might but did so systematically—philosophically, as it were. If the culminating expression of the German Middle Ages was the murder of whole Jewish communities, the action most characteristic of the Nazi regime was the Holocaust. To quote Leo Strauss for the last time, the Third Reich was "the only German regime—the only regime ever anywhere—which had no other clear principle than murderous hatred of Jews."

Having looked at the Wall, I climbed a ladder to look beyond. The dreary prospect that greeted me was empty but for a large number of black birds. "What birds are these?" I asked my companion, who did not know. Then it came to me: ravens! In a legend known to all German children in my time, the Emperor Friedrich Barbarossa never died, but sits waiting inside the Kyffhaeuser Mountain, his red beard growing longer and longer, for *der Tag*, the day of reckoning which will herald his inevitable return and the reconquest of all the once-German lands; but so long as ravens still circle the mountain, *der Tag* will not come.

As I descended the ladder, I reflected that with Hitler and the Nazi Reich, *der Tag* had indeed come, and *der Tag* had gone; as for the ravens, they seemed to have settled permanently in the heart of Communist East Germany. Here was a tragedy, a German tragedy, which I fully shared. Yet my feeling of solidarity vanished as, standing once again on "our" side of the Wall, and gazing at the graffiti there, I was abruptly reminded that ever since Fichte and Friess, ever since the onset of that longing for the Middle Ages which coincided with the end of the Middle Ages, the worst enemies of the Germans have been not Frenchmen, Englishmen, or Russians—and certainly not Jews—but Germans themselves. In my mind's eye I visualized on the wall an omnipresent motto of my youth, "*Wir danken unserem Fuehrer*"—we thank our Fuehrer—and I could not erase it from my imagination.

5.

THAT WAS in November 1984. On a November day five years later, the Berlin Wall was breached, and once again I felt like a German. This time, on November 9, 1989, I was not in Berlin but in the United States, at Colorado College, lecturing on *Kristallnacht*, of which this date marked the 51st anniversary. I heard later about what had happened in Berlin, and later still saw the images on TV.

In my lecture that morning I had described how the Nazi state had legalized crime, had made Jews into non-humans in law before treating them as non-humans in deed. What happened at Auschwitz during the war may not have been common knowledge in Germany. But in 1938, there was no one in all of Germany and Austria who did not know about the hundreds of synagogues that had been set on fire and the thousands of Jewish storefronts smashed during *Kristallnacht*.

My lecture mixed general reflection with personal experience. At one point I said that what I saw in Berlin the day after *Kristallnacht* had been worse than my subsequent experiences in the concentration camp at Sachsenhausen. The people operating Sachsenhausen, after all, were SS men and *kapos*. But when my late friend Karl Rautenberg (later to be known in England as Rabbi Charles Berg) and I, oblivious to personal danger, wandered around Berlin to see the damage on November 10, 1938, and at length arrived at the fashionable "Ku-damm" (Berlin's Fifth Avenue), we discovered there well-dressed, respectable citizens stepping over the broken glass, climbing into Jewish stores, helping themselves to shoes, coats, gloves, and the rest. The legalization of crime had done its work.

Now on November 9, 1989, I saw in the breach of the Berlin Wall, not only brothers embracing, sisters embracing, but also the chance of a new beginning in German history. But what kind of beginning? Would history, or would it not, repeat itself? Did any of those rejoicing on November 9 remember the other November 9? Would they learn about, think about, what I had seen with my own eyes on the "Ku-damm" in 1938? Would anyone, thinking about the Wall, think too of the motto that sprang irresistibly to my own mind? Is it not worth reflecting on the strange conjunction that the Fuehrer and all he stood for, the worst enemy of the German people in modern history, was also the worst enemy of the Jewish people in all history?

6.

EVER since I moved with my family to Jerusalem in 1983, I have been involved with *Studium in Israel*. This is a Christian organization in Germany that for the past twelve years or so has annually sent twenty or so theology students to study and live in Jerusalem. I meet with these young people year after year, discussing with them Jewish-Christian and Jewish-German relations in an age in which there has been a Holocaust and there is now an Israel. In years past I used to lecture to them; this year, I said that when it came to Germany, I wanted to listen. I could tell them—and I did tell them—about the German-Jewish past, now dead and gone. But what of the future?

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My question was greeted, at first, by silence. It was broken by a young woman who expressed her grief at the fact that when there was a major Jewish presence in her country, Germans paid no serious attention to it, and now that some Germans did wish to pay attention, there was, so far as Jews in Germany were concerned, only a gaping hole, only the wounded presence of an absence. The ensuing discussion produced little, could produce little, beyond the thought that in order for German history not to repeat itself, the best thing Germans could do was what these young people were doing—spending time in Israel, and better still in Jerusalem. Not everyone, to be sure, could be expected to study Jewish sources. But to visit Jewish Jerusalem was possible for many, and a positive obligation for anyone considering himself a thinking person.

At the time when the German longing for the Middle Ages began, when Fichte and Friess, the one nobly, the other ignobly, set German history on the course that made Germans into their own worst enemies, the cry "HEP! HEP!" reverberated in the streets of Germany. It was an abbreviation of a Latin phrase meaning "Jerusalem is destroyed." Perhaps Germans concerned to set German history on a new and better course must indeed seek orientation in a Jerusalem rebuilt. And perhaps those rejoicing in the collapse of the Berlin Wall, if they worry at all about the possibility of history repeating itself, can do no better than to relate this symbolic wall to another wall, the Wall in Jerusalem—that Wall to which, during nearly two millennia of exile, Jews could come only to wail, but to which, after the Holocaust, of all impossible times, of all necessary times, they have returned; to which they have returned in order to stay.

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The Best Songwriter of Them All

William G. Hyland

When Irving Berlin died last year, almost all his obituaries included some version of Jerome Kern's famous praise: "Irving Berlin has *no* place in American music. He *is* American music."

How seriously should we take this appraisal? It was written in a letter to Alexander Woollcott, to be included in Woollcott's biography of Berlin, published in 1925. At the time, Kern could not have anticipated the emergence of George Gershwin, and his own memorable score for *Show Boat* was still in the future. Furthermore, the brilliant team of Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart was just starting in the mid-1920's, as was Cole Porter, and it would be thirty years before Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe would write *My Fair Lady*.

Is Kern's evaluation still valid? Is Irving Berlin the best American songwriter of them all? If not, who is?

A contest for the best American songwriter probably would include about ten to twelve candidates, ranging chronologically from Victor Herbert to Stephen Sondheim, but the three finalists surely would have to be Berlin himself, Kern, and Gershwin.*

They had much in common. All three were Jewish. All were of immigrant stock, and they all grew up and lived most of their lives in New York. Many other major songwriters fit this profile, but it was Berlin, Kern, and Gershwin who came to dominate the era that began with the outbreak of World War I and continued until the end of World War II.

Berlin was born in Russia in 1888, probably in the province of Mogilev, about 200 miles east of Minsk. His family emigrated to the United States in 1893 when he was five. The family's name was mistakenly recorded on arrival as Beilin, though in fact it was Baline.

On the Lower East Side, the Balines lived in real poverty, so that after his father died, when he was only eight years old, Israel (or "Izzy") was forced into bumming and scuffling on the streets of Chinatown and the Bowery. In time he became a singing waiter in Chinatown, at the Pelham Café, popularly known as "Nigger Mike's," so named for the owner Mike Salter, a swarthy Jew from Odessa. But it was in the back room of Jimmy Kelly's tavern on Union Square that the future Irving Berlin first began to pick away at an old piano, just barely being able to sort out a melody on the black keys (the key of F sharp).

Obviously he absorbed the experiences and sounds of his bizarre but colorful surroundings. His father, who had been a cantor in Russia, "spent his strength," as Woollcott quaintly put it, "training this small son's voice for the music which is the plaint of a homeless people to the great Jehovah." But apart from that, Berlin had no formal musical education; indeed, he was musically illiterate. He could neither read nor transcribe music; in later years, he made a brief effort to learn, but gave it up after Victor Herbert warned him that it might cramp his style. Eventually Berlin did learn to play the piano, and resented stories that he could only use one finger. Nevertheless, throughout his career he sang his tunes to a musical secretary who transcribed the melodic line, and then played it back while Berlin selected the harmonies by ear—a truly remarkable natural talent.

Unlike other composers of that era, Berlin also wrote all his own lyrics. It is worth recording that the man who produced the sophisticated words to "Top Hat, White Tie, and Tails" was the son of parents who spoke only Yiddish; noteworthy too is that this same man only finished the second grade. (Cole Porter also wrote both words and music, but then he was from Yale.)

Along with the Berlins on the Lower East Side

William G. Hyland is the editor of *Foreign Affairs* and the author of, most recently, *The Cold War Is Over*. He is now working on a combined biography of Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, and Jerome Kern.

* A major new biography of Berlin, Laurence Bergreen's *As Thousands Cheer: The Life of Irving Berlin* (Viking, 658 pp., $24.95), probes many of the intriguing questions about Berlin's public and private life, but curiously, does not offer a definitive judgment of Berlin's music. See also a recently published letter to Berlin by his daughter, Mary Ellin Barrett (*Lear's*, June 1990). Berlin's family has announced plans to re-release many of his songs, to authorize yet another biography, and, perhaps, to open his archives of unpublished material. An excellent biography of Kern is Gerald Bordman's *Jerome Kern: His Life and Music* (Oxford University Press, 1980). The best and most recent biography of Gershwin is Edward Jablonski's *Gershwin: A Biography* (Doubleday, 1987).

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were the Gershwins (Gershowitz). The parents of George (and Ira) were also Russian immigrants, but the family was much better off financially than the Berlins. A sister, Frances Gershwin, remembers that they always had a maid, and after the premiere of the fictional movie biography of Gershwin, *Rhapsody in Blue*, his mother was overheard to mutter, "We were never that poor."

The Gershwins moved frequently, and George was born in Brooklyn in 1898. A dropout from vocational high school, Gershwin became a pianist of great virtuosity under the tutelage of a well-known teacher, Charles Hambitzer. He also studied theory and harmony with another well-known teacher, Edward Kilenyi, as well as with Rubin Goldmark, the teacher of Aaron Copland. When he was nineteen, Gershwin worked as a rehearsal pianist for a Jerome Kern musical.

In contrast to Berlin and Gershwin, Jerome Kern was not a child of the East European Jewish ghetto. His father, Henry, an immigrant from Germany, became a successful businessman. Kern's mother was a skilled pianist, almost of professional capability (and her father, Seligman Kakeles, an immigrant from Bohemia, was the long-time sexton of Temple Emanu-El, then on Twelfth Street in New York). Jerome, born in New York in 1885, graduated from high school in Newark, where he wrote the class revue, which allegedly included some song fragments that he later used for his Broadway shows. He enrolled in the New York College of Music, but did not finish. Still, he became an accomplished pianist, and when he was seventeen, he traveled to Germany for some further musical study, and later went to London where he began to make his way as a composer.

DESPITE the differences among Berlin, Gershwin, and Kern, it is tempting to make a connection between their success as songwriters and their Jewish roots and immigrant origins, particularly as so many other popular American composers fit this same pattern. (Cole Porter, from a wealthy Wasp family in Indiana, stands out as almost the sole exception.) Yet precisely because of their origins, each came to emphasize his Americanness.

Berlin, of course, never stopped paying homage to his adopted country. After all, it was Izzy Baline who wrote "God Bless America." But dogged by the rumor that a young black boy in Harlem actually wrote his songs, Berlin rather disconcertingly countered, in an interview in 1920: "Our popular songwriters and composers are not Negroes. . . . Many of them are of Russian birth or ancestry. All of them are of pure white blood. As in the case of everything else American, their universally popular music is the product of a sort of a musical melting pot." On another occasion, Berlin said of the Russian Jews who had come to dominate popular music that "Their distinctive school is a combination of the influence of Southern plantation songs, of European music from almost countless countries, and of the syncopation that is found in the music of innumerable nationalities—found even in the music of the old master composers."

Gershwin was also frequently quoted as saying that he only wrote American music: "My people are American—my time is now." And one historian of musical comedy, Gerald Bordman, has asserted that Gershwin "more than any other composer seemed to speak to the world with a totally American voice." Still, two of Gershwin's biographers, Charles Schwartz and Isaac Goldberg, argue that his music was derived from his Jewish roots. To be sure, Ira Gershwin always denied any such Jewish influence on his brother's music (to which he often wrote lyrics). Yet it is possible to hear in the opening theme of *Rhapsody in Blue* an echo of the popular *klezmer* bands that performed around the Lower East Side—though of course one could just as well hear an echo of the jazz bands of that period.

Kern seemed least affected by his Jewish origins, and nothing is more American than *Show Boat*. Even so, when his lyricist (or "collaborator," to use the term Kern preferred) Oscar Hammerstein was worried about how to derive a musical score for a new show they were planning about the Italian Marco Polo, set in the Orient, but told by an Irishman, Kern reassured him, "It will be good Jewish music."

In any case, out of the Russian Jewish community came such performers as Fanny Brice, Eddie Cantor, Al Jolson, and Sophie Tucker, and (in addition to Berlin and Gershwin) such songwriters as Harry Ruby, Harry Warren, Irving Caesar (who wrote "Swanee" with George Gershwin), E.Y. "Yip" Harburg, a classmate of Ira Gershwin's who wrote all the lyrics for *The Wizard of Oz*.

Harry Ruby, who wrote "Three Little Words," once claimed—only half-jokingly—that the great songwriters from the Lower East Side were produced by the omnipresence of the piano. And indeed, the piano was a status symbol. The Yiddish daily, the *Forward*, commented:

> There is no question but that a piano in the front room is preferable to a boarder. It gives spiritual pleasure to exhausted workers. But in most cases the piano is not for pleasure but to make martyrs of little children, and make them mentally ill.

Another article complained of the Victrola as well:

> God sent us the Victrola, and you can't get away from it unless you run to the park. As if we didn't have enough problems with cockroaches and children practicing the piano next door. . . . It's everywhere, this Victrola, in the tenements, the restaurants, the ice-cream parlors, the candy stores. You lock your doors at night and

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are safe from burglars, but not from the Victrola.

No doubt it was Berlin's lack of formal training that inclined him for the most part to single songs rather than complete scores for Broadway shows. But in a sense this was an advantage. Broadway show songs often die because they sound strange when sung out of context (Sondheim is the best example), whereas a popular songwriter like Berlin could exploit eternal themes ("I'll Be Loving You, Always") and popular fads ("Everybody's Doing It"). His first genuine hit, "Alexander's Ragtime Band" (1911), was certainly not a rag, closer to a march. Yet the title and lyrics caught the spirit of the times, and this was Berlin's greatest talent. He could articulate the thoughts and feelings of the American public better than anyone, and he did so for fifty years.

Berlin was also a shrewd businessman. He formed his first publishing company in 1914 and for most of his life published his own compositions. In 1921, he built the Music Box Theater (still standing on 45th Street), and produced a series of revues featuring his own music. The theater cost over $900,000 to build, then considered a risky investment. But the first of the annual revues (September 1921) was quite successful. Later they were less well received, and finally they closed.

In 1923 Robert Benchley, who did a humorous sketch for one of these revues, wrote the following description of a rehearsal of a number featuring chorus girls clad in tiger skins:

> The house is dark. . . . The director climbs up on the stage with the stage managers. "All right now. Music please. All right, tiger skin girls!" The pianist plays several bars and is stopped again. Then a little man in a tight-fitting suit with his hands in his pockets walks on from the wings. He looks very white in the glare from the foot. You almost expect him to be thrown out. He seems so casual and like an observer. They don't throw him out, however, because he is Mr. Berlin.

By the time these first revues were mounted Berlin had already written successful Broadway shows, as well as such hits as "I Love a Piano," "Play a Simple Melody," "All Alone," and "What'll I Do." And, of course, when he was in the army he had written "Oh, How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning."

In the late 20's, however, came a long dry spell in Berlin's career, probably caused by a number of upheavals in his private life. Berlin's first wife had died in 1912 shortly after their honeymoon, and in 1926 he married a prominent socialite and writer for the *New Yorker*, Ellin Mackay. The marriage attracted considerable publicity because her father, a leading New York businessman, disowned her as a result. Then a son, Irving Berlin, Jr., died after only twenty-five days, on Christmas 1928.

Yet even the dry spell brought on by these events yielded "Say It Isn't So" and "Shakin' the Blues Away," introduced in the Ziegfeld *Follies* by Ruth Etting, as well as one of Berlin's most enduring songs, "Puttin' on the Ritz." (Originally a "coon" song, it was popularized in an early movie by the Ziegfeld star Harry Richman. Years later its lyrics were cleaned up and it became a vehicle for Fred Astaire.)

The dry spell was finally broken in 1932 with the help of the energetic and clever Moss Hart (then only twenty-eight), who persuaded Berlin to work with him on a satirical revue he was producing, *Face the Music*. A more significant breakthrough came the following year with Hart's production of a new satire of current events, *As Thousands Cheer*, for which Berlin wrote "Easter Parade" and "Heat Wave." The New York *Times* drama critic, Brooks Atkinson, observed that "Mr. Berlin has never written better tunes or more sparkling lyrics," and Berlin's comeback was complete when he appeared on the cover of *Time*. He then left for Hollywood to begin a new phase of his career. There he scored with such great hits as "Cheek to Cheek," "Change Partners," and "White Christmas" before returning to Broadway in triumph with *Annie Get Your Gun* and *Call Me Madam*, both starring Ethel Merman, who had first appeared on Broadway years earlier in Gershwin's *Girl Crazy*.

Berlin's last show, *Mr. President* (1962), was not a critical success, although it ran eight months on advance sales, and his last published song was "An Old-Fashioned Wedding," written in 1966 when he was almost eighty. He died on September 22, 1989.

Gershwin's abilities at the piano were truly extraordinary and were the secret of his success as a composer. His friend Oscar Levant, himself a noted pianist, wrote: "[Gershwin] had such fluency at the piano and so steady a surge of ideas that any time he sat down just to amuse himself something came of it. Actually this is how he got most of his ideas—just by playing." His harmony teacher, Edward Kilenyi, later said that Gershwin was the "kind of student who did not have to work and labor mechanically, nor did he have to write pages and pages of his lessons to show he assimilated [them]. . . . His way of working was musical, not merely intellectual, or mechanical. Notes on paper meant music to him."

Yet Gershwin was plagued by the suspicion that there was something missing in his own natural talent. Even in the late 1930's, after he had become renowned as a composer, he was still speculating on going to Paris to study. According to one of the most famous Gershwin anecdotes, he once asked a famous classical composer (Maurice Ravel

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in some versions, Igor Stravinsky in others) to take him as a pupil. The composer asked how much money Gershwin made and after Gershwin answered, the composer said that perhaps he should take lessons from Gershwin.

One characteristic of Gershwin's music could not be taught, even by a skilled teacher. He had an unusual feel for the blues. He never wrote a classical blues in the style of W.C. Handy's 12-bar structure for "St. Louis Blues." But early in his career he absorbed an appreciation of the effect of the harmonic devices that gave the blues their melancholia—i.e., the "blue" notes.

In general, Gershwin was fascinated by the American Negro and by what then was called "colored music." His first abortive operetta (*Blue Monday*), set in a bar in Harlem, employed about every racist cliché imaginable in the 1920's, but these were the creation of the librettist and lyricist Buddy DeSylva. The idea for the show itself was Gershwin's, however, and, of course, it foreshadowed his opera *Porgy and Bess*. Gershwin also admired the great black composer and bandleader Duke Ellington, whom he promoted for the stage band in one of his Broadway shows.

Perhaps it was Gershwin's association with ragtime that prepared him both for the blues and for jazz. He was a skilled ragtime pianist, but one suspects that he absorbed this music as he did almost everything—by hearing it and then putting it through his own special blender to produce an authentic Gershwin piece.

In September 1923, Gershwin turned twenty-five. He had already composed one highly successful song ("Swanee"), at least another half-dozen popular ones, and a hit show. He was making $125 a week writing for George White's *Scandals*, but already he was drawn to more serious musical forms. His chance to act on this attraction came when the bandleader Paul Whiteman asked him to write a jazz concerto.

Gershwin started the *Rhapsody in Blue* on January 7, 1924, and finished less than three weeks later, on January 25. Near the end, Ferde Grofé, Whiteman's orchestrator, stopped by every day to pick up new manuscript pages. The two discussed the orchestration, and Gershwin made notations on the score as to which soloists in the Whiteman band could perform which passages. Gershwin wrote the entire composition, leaving only one gap for his own piano cadenza. But the final orchestration for Whiteman's band was Grofé's.*

In leaving the orchestration to someone else, Gershwin was following the common practice of popular composers. Even their sheet music was usually arranged or edited by staff writers at the publishing houses. Much of the sound of the Broadway musical, including Gershwin, Kern's *Show Boat*, and Berlin's *Annie Get Your Gun* was, in fact, the sound of an orchestrator named Robert Russell Bennett, just as the sound of the *Rhapsody* was Grofé's.

Gershwin claimed that with the *Rhapsody* he wanted to strike a blow against the stereotype of jazz. But was the *Rhapsody* jazz? In the narrowest sense of the term it was not: there was no improvisation, there were no driving rhythms, and it was not even very "blue." It was not the kind of jazz that Louis Armstrong and Jelly Roll Morton were playing. But the spirit of the piece is jazz: the opening phrase is a close kin of Louis Armstrong's cadenza in "West End Blues." And if one listens to the early Original Dixieland Jazz Band recordings, it is impossible not to note the similarities between the glissando opening of the *Rhapsody* and the piercing clarinet of Larry Shields, soaring above Nick Laroca's cornet lead. The piano solos of the *Rhapsody* also owe a great deal to the black pianists Scott Joplin and James P. Johnson.

Nine months after the premiere of the *Rhapsody*, Gershwin finally teamed up with his brother Ira to write a musical, *Lady Be Good*. It was the first jazz-age musical and it marked the beginning of a decade of sustained collaboration between the two brothers. Over the next ten years, a dozen new musicals would follow, featuring over 200 Gershwin songs. In Hollywood, they also turned out "They Can't Take That Away From Me," "Nice Work If You Can Get It," "A Foggy Day in London Town," and "Love Walked In." And then, of course, there was Gershwin's final Broadway production, the opera *Porgy and Bess*. Two years after it opened, Gershwin died of a brain tumor, on July 11, 1937, at the age of thirty-eight.

UNLIKE Berlin and Gershwin, Kern composed few songs out of the context of either a movie or a theater production. He took great interest in every detail of a production, often working on the plot and the book, suggesting staging, and occasionally writing a lyric. He always composed the music first, leaving it to his "collaborators" to supply the needed couplets. He was hot-tempered and difficult to work with. On the other hand, his most important collaborators, Oscar Hammerstein and Dorothy Fields, found him a charming partner, suggesting that it was only the lesser talents he could not abide.

Kern was also sensitive to performers. He was so tied to the modalities of the production that he would allow marvelous songs to be slighted by the action on stage (e.g., "The Song Is You" from *Music in the Air*). When another composer, Arthur Schwartz, remonstrated with Kern, pointing out that he was losing his own melody in a comic routine, Kern gruffly replied that "the scene calls for it."

* This original version was for "Jazz Band," but it fell into disuse, replaced by another, lusher Grofé version for a "symphonic" orchestra. Although efforts have been made in recent years to revive the original version, it is still the later one that is most familiar.

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It was in association with two Englishmen, Guy Bolton and the humorist P.G. Wodehouse, that Kern made American musical history in the Princess Theater shows, between 1914 and 1918. Most musicals of the period had plots that were either about some exotic, neo-Balkan country, or were little more than a framework for star turns. The Princess series, especially *Leave It to Jane* and *Very Good Eddie*, both set in authentic American backgrounds, created a new standard for book musicals: the plots made sense, or at least were cohesive; the music helped the plot line; and Wodehouse's lyrics were clever and relevant.

Kern's career took off: soon he was writing for Ziegfeld productions featuring such famous stars as Marilyn Miller. A far more ambitious project was *Show Boat* in 1927. It was basically Kern's idea. After he had read Edna Ferber's novel he persuaded Oscar Hammerstein to collaborate and then sold the idea to a dubious Ziegfeld. Coming a decade after the Princess series, it was another startling innovation. *Show Boat* had a serious story line (racial bigotry, miscegenation, a broken marriage) and the music was integral to the scenario. American "musical comedy," as it was still called, would never be the same.

Kern would forever be identified with "Ol' Man River," the most famous number in *Show Boat* and perhaps his most durable success. Hammerstein claims he inspired the song when he urged Kern to take some incidental background music from the opening scene, and invert the figures. In the semi-fictional movie biography of Kern, *Till the Clouds Roll By*, the actor playing him, Robert Walker, stands on a levee in Memphis, gazing out on the great river as a show boat passes, and the churning of the giant paddle wheel inevitably blends into the strains of "Ol' Man River." The reality is that this classic of the deep South was composed in Kern's study in Bronxville, New York.*

After *Show Boat* Kern continued to mature as a composer. Indeed, many of his best songs were still to come in a succession of Broadway hits: *Cat and the Fiddle* (1931) featured "The Night Was Made for Love," and "She Didn't Say Yes." *Music in the Air* (1932) showcased "I've Told Every Little Star," with lyrics by Hammerstein. In 1933 there was *Roberta* with "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," "Yesterdays," and "The Touch of Your Hand."

After *Roberta*, Kern decided to settle in Hollywood. George and Ira Gershwin, when they came to Beverly Hills, lived a few blocks away. On Kern's fiftieth birthday, Woollcott in New York broadcast a special tribute and at a given signal Kern's doorbell rang; when he opened the door, there stood Irving Berlin with a bouquet of flowers.

Kern returned to Broadway only once, in 1939, for the ill-fated *Very Warm for May*. His movie music, however, was of high quality and included songs like "The Way You Look Tonight," "A Fine Romance," and "I Won't Dance," as well as "The Last Time I Saw Paris," one of the few he ever wrote to prepared lyrics (by Hammerstein).

Kern died in 1945 during a visit to New York where he had gone to work on a revival of *Show Boat*, and also to explore a new musical to be produced by Rodgers and Hammerstein. After Kern's death, the project was offered to Irving Berlin, who hesitated because he had only done one "book" musical since 1919. Under pressure from Rodgers for an answer, Berlin reluctantly acknowledged that he already had written three songs over the weekend, including "They Say That Falling In Love Is Wonderful." Pleased by Rodgers's reaction, Berlin accepted his offer. The show was *Annie Get Your Gun*.

THERE is no easy way to judge the best songwriter. Some guidelines are obviously necessary. In his classic book, *What to Listen for in Music*, the composer Aaron Copland lists four "essential" elements of music: rhythm, melody, harmony, and tonal color. This order has to be slightly modified for the popular song. Melody must be considered first, if only because most popular music is written to be sung, and the rhythm cannot vary too much. Melody functions as the plot does in a story: it guides the listener. But since a piece of music has a purpose, a melody has to have what Copland calls an "expressive quality" to arouse an emotional response in the listener.

Who, then, was the best melodist, Berlin, Kern, or Gershwin?

Kern was a fine craftsman, while Berlin was more natural and Gershwin more inspired. Kern's melodic lines, thanks in part to his European inspiration, were long and flowing (e.g., "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes"). Berlin's lines were more tightly knit ("Say It With Music"), while Gershwin felt free to leap about ("Someone to Watch Over Me"). But such an analysis cannot be carried very far. Kern leaped about in "Make Believe" and Gershwin's "Embraceable You" is as tightly knit as Berlin's "Always."

Alec Wilder in his monumental analysis, *American Popular Song*, studied and assessed over 3,500 songs for their melodic innovations. Even in such an exhaustive study there is always a large element of subjectivity. Wilder, for example, wrote that Berlin's "Always" was "frankly" not one of his favorites. This comment particularly outraged Berlin, according to Laurence Bergreen's vivid description of his reaction. And indeed, others find "Always" an example of Berlin's "daring" construction: the melodic line shifts keys three times, with startling harmonic progressions.

* John McGlinn has recently recorded a definitive version of *Show Boat*, based on the discovery of old manuscripts and including songs cut from the original production and added to the movie versions. McGlinn has commented that contemplating the original orchestration of "Ol' Man River" was like "cleaning off an old oil painting."

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Most popular composers gradually became prisoners of the 32-bar format, which usually meant the AABA formula. This involved repeating an eight-bar phrase (A) with variations three times; the middle section (B) was in a different key, and was described as the "release" or "bridge." Given these strictures, it is not surprising that Berlin once said in an interview, "We depend largely on tricks, we writers of songs. There is no such thing as a new melody." But Gershwin asserted the opposite: "No matter what they say about nothing new under the sun, it is always possible to invent something original. The songwriter takes an idea and adds his own individuality to it."

Berlin was also fond of saying that there are only six songs, and that the composer only rearranged them. Yet his own career disproves this beyond question (and it is doubtful that he ever meant it). The lyricist Sammy Cahn claimed that anyone who could write six memorable songs should be satisfied, but sixty could easily be accounted to Berlin. All things considered, he was the best melodist.

In the second category—rhythm—it is clearly Gershwin who wins. Gershwin reveled in rhythm, in part because he played the piano so well. To his best dance numbers—"Fascinating Rhythm" and "I Got Rhythm"—one could add "Sweet and Low Down" or "Clap Yo' Hands."

Berlin, it is true, had a good feel for rhythm, and his partisans could point to "Everybody Step," which foreshadowed Gershwin's "Fascinating Rhythm." And Berlin's songs for Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers were certainly fine dance numbers, especially "Cheek to Cheek," but the graceful ballroom quality of the rhythm is no match for the raw, rugged beats of Gershwin. As for Kern, he could not write "swing," and was proud of it.

COPLAND'S third element is harmony, which he acknowledges is the most sophisticated of his musical elements. What is harmony? According to Copland's definition: "The sounding together of separate tones produce chords. Harmony considered as a science is the study of these chords and their relationships among one another."

Obviously, the layman cannot be expected to fathom this "science." Melodies can be distinguished, and differences appreciated, as can different rhythms, but harmony is far more visceral. The layman absorbs a well-known melody together with its harmony. Change the harmony, and the listener will assume that a mistake has been made. By the same token, an ordinary melody can be enriched by the choice of harmonies.

Gershwin was a superb manipulator of harmony. Alec Wilder writes that Gershwin "seldom, if ever, allowed his harmony to remain static, as did so many of the other writers." Nor can Kern be slighted here. He too could write complex patterns, but was equally comfortable with very sparse, standard harmonies. "I've Told Every Little Star," one of his own favorites, has only two chords, the traditional tonic and dominant in the refrain. The chief difference between Kern and Gershwin is that Kern seemed content to remain roughly within the confines of classical harmonies, drawing on the relevant modern innovations as necessary, while Gershwin deliberately sought out the most advanced progression of chords (e.g., "Nice Work If You Can Get It" and "Who Cares"). But Gershwin did it both with a knowledge of how to deal with the new sounds and an instinct for when to use as well as when to avoid them.

Berlin suffers in this area from his lack of technique. Yet his harmonies are at times surprising, and almost always quite effective. Once the Hollywood songwriter-conductor Johnny Green ("Body and Soul") suggested a change in harmony to Berlin, who asked to hear it first his way and then in Green's version. After the alternate versions were played several times, Berlin finally said, leave it. A Berlin song was a Berlin song.

The fourth and final element is what Copland calls tonal color. He means "timbre," or, as he explains, the difference in painting between green and white. Copland cites as an example the opening flute passage in Debussy's *Afternoon of a Faun*. Played by another instrument, the "color" of the composition would change and "induce a very different emotional feeling." But this is too restrictive for the popular songwriter. An appropriate substitute for tonal color might be "style," which means that special quality or individuality the songwriter brings to his work.

In Kern's case this quality was a blend of European sophistication and American innocence. Richard Rodgers noted that Kern had one foot in Europe and one in America, but finally he firmly planted his European foot alongside his American one. Kern's European orientation is too often cited as a weakness. It was also his great strength. His genius was that he could extract the essence of both traditions and both cultures, and synthesize a genuine Kern style. It was this dexterity that allowed him to reshape American musical comedy from a faint echo of London's West End to a new style of musical theater. Kern set the standard for a classical Broadway style, and his heirs carried it into another new era: *Oklahoma* would not have been possible without *Show Boat*. Richard Rodgers was Kern's natural successor, as were Lerner and Loewe, and even Stephen Sondheim owes something to Kern.

George Gershwin also owed a debt to Kern, but the Gershwin style was the sound of urban America, and especially of Manhattan and Broadway. Even when he was writing about the Western plains in *Girl Crazy*, or about an American in Paris, or about Catfish Row, the style was still distinctive. In developing this style, he was helped

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immeasurably by his brother's witty and sophisticated lyrics, even those that rhymed China with Heine.

Gershwin was successful in capturing the spirit of Catfish Row but this was an act of professional craftsmanship, and after *Porgy and Bess* a new Gershwin emerged with more spartan and straightforward lines, less ragged jazz; a greater sense of sadness crept into his final songs. Clearly Gershwin was in a state of transition when he died. He was weary of Hollywood and exasperated with Sam Goldwyn's pressure to write hits "like Irving Berlin." Where this transition would have led no one can say, but it would undoubtedly have been exciting.

Nevertheless, the award for style must go to Irving Berlin. The reason, paradoxically, is that he had no style. And the reason for that, in turn, is that his range was so phenomenal. There was no category of popular music that eluded him. He could write love songs, waltzes, ragtime, swing, jazz, or novelties. He complained to Richard Rodgers that he could not write hillbilly music for *Annie Get Your Gun*, but then he wrote "Doin' What Comes Natur'lly," and for the very same show which included the lovely "They Say It's Wonderful." Alec Wilder offers a list of fourteen Berlin songs, each with a different stylistic character.

In Copland's four categories, the average ratings would be in Berlin's favor, though a strong case could be made for Gershwin. Had Berlin and Kern stopped writing after 1937, when Gershwin died, their output would have excluded "All the Things You Are" and "Long Ago and Far Away" for Kern, and for Berlin, "White Christmas," "There's No Business Like Show Business," and even "God Bless America." If Kern had died at age thirty-eight, as Gershwin did, there would have been no *Show Boat*. Moreover, it is impossible to know how to weigh Gershwin's concert music, especially *Rhapsody in Blue* and *An American in Paris*.

If there were a contest for greatest composer, Gershwin would be the easy winner. But as Berlin said, "composer" is too overblown a title for what he did. He wrote popular songs. And those melodies and words had to come from somewhere. If not from technical expertise or training, they had to come from the heart. And that in the last analysis is why Wilder was right to conclude that Berlin was "the best all-around, over-all songwriter America has ever had."

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Another Rare Visit With Noah Danzig

A Story

Joseph Epstein

I AM writing this with a five-for-a-dollar Bic ballpoint on lined notebook paper, both purchased for me in the hospital gift shop by a black orderly named André with a be-bop walk and the hairdo known, I believe, as the Drippy. For someone who has always been quite sniffy about the materials of his craft—stationery by Balfour, pens by Mont Blanc—these are damned poor tools. But then I shouldn't be complaining. That the staff in the small psychiatric ward here at Louis A. Weiss Memorial Hospital allows me to have a pen or anything with a sharp point at all is a concession, a victory, a great leap forward in my recovery. Seven weeks ago, on the night I was dragged in here by the police, in a hammerlock, a cop's meaty hand over my mouth, through the emergency-room entrance on Clarendon Avenue, they made the mistake of leaving my watch on my wrist. When I woke from the first strong sedative I smashed the crystal and tried to eat the glass; or so they tell me. I guess I broke down in a big way, really flipped, cracked up in italics.

Life's bitter little ironies, both my parents died at Louis A. Weiss Memorial. Louie Weiss was a big-time liquor distributor, from which, as we say in Chicago, you can draw your own conclusions. I can remember when the hospital was first built, on Marine Drive with views of the lake, in the 1950's. It seemed a grand place. Forgive the literary allusion, but whenever I thought of Louis A. Weiss Memorial Hospital I always remembered a passage from a Karl Shapiro poem which runs:

> This is the Oxford of all sicknesses.
> Kings have lain here and fabulous small Jews
> And actresses whose legs were always news.

About the kings and actresses I am not prepared to say, but there was never, at least in the old days, a serious shortage of fabulous small Jews at Louis A. Weiss Memorial: little men with marcelled hair, manicures, and impressive cuff links. But the neighborhood changed. The new generation of well-to-do Jews moved out to the northern suburbs. Uptown, on the edge of which the hospital was situated, became Appalachian (or "billy," as we say in Chicago). Mexicans moved in along the streets west of Sheridan Road, Vietnamese took over Argyle Street, and blacks were everywhere. The Jews once again became a minority, even at Louis A. Weiss, which used to seem for all intents and purposes a Jewish institution. As I roam these halls in my blue terry-cloth robe, now that I have been given the run of the floor, I occasionally come upon some old guy with a goatee in peach-colored slacks and a Madras jacket, looking slightly dazed, as if he had checked into a once grand hotel in Miami Beach—the Fontainebleau, say, or the Eden Roc—only to find that the action and the old clientele had gone elsewhere.

I am, as you may have gathered from the snippet of verse quoted above, a literary man. Specifically I am a literary biographer, or, more precisely, a biographer of writers. I have written studies of Alexander Herzen, the Goncourt Brothers, Bronson Alcott, and Louise Bogan. Secondary characters, I suppose most of them might be called. But then I have never thought of myself as writing about particular men and women so much as about particular instances of the old and unsolved problem of the relation between the writer and his writing, the manifold connections between life and work—and especially the almost inevitable clash between decent behavior and the production of stellar art, the choice that all writers at a certain level of seriousness seem sooner or later to have to make between greater imperfection of the life or of the work. As a biographer and literary man, this, for me, has been the all-absorbing, the only really interesting question.

I don't for a moment expect that you have read any of my little studies, all of which were brought out by university presses and are rather specialized. What you may have read, or at any rate heard about, is my essay on Noah Danzig. It ran about eighteen months ago in the *New Yorker*, at a length of some 80-odd columns, under the rubric "Reflections" and the title "Imperfection of the Life and the Work." Noah had been dead a little more than a year when it appeared. My editor at the *New Yorker*, a woman in her seventies who keeps two standard poodles in a one-bedroom apartment in the Village and has been working for

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JOSEPH EPSTEIN, whose story, "Marshall Wexler's Brilliant Career," appeared in our July issue, is the editor of the *American Scholar*. His stories have also appeared in *Harper's*, *Hudson Review*, and *The Best American Short Stories*. A new book of his essays, *A Line Out for A Walk*, will be published by Norton in the spring.

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more than thirty years on a translation of Prevost, when she called to inform me of the essay's acceptance said, in a sibilant whisper, "It's devastating, you know, absolutely devastating." She went on to remark that Noah Danzig's reputation would never survive my "little piece of handiwork." "You have quite finished him off," she hissed. "After your essay appears, he will be done for." I cannot say that I was displeased to hear her say it.

I first met the novelist Noah Danzig roughly twenty-six years ago, through the New York *Times*. I had written a few pieces for that newspaper's Sunday book-review section, and one day an editor there telephoned to ask, with some trepidation, if I would care to do an interview with Danzig. I say with some trepidation because a few months earlier the same editor had asked if I would care to do a similar piece on a Chicago poet for whom I hadn't the least regard. "No," I remembered replying, "but if she would care to do an interview with me, I suppose I would be willing to consider it."

But Noah Danzig was different. He was a writer I hugely, all but unstintingly, admired. Then on the edge of winning all the international recognition and prizes that would be his, he already had a select and intensely devoted following. A Noah Danzig novel had about it an unexplainable, quite magical feeling of intimacy. Its author seemed to be saying what you thought and felt, only better—more penetratingly, with fuller understanding, richer humor, much more elegantly formulated. Around this time, I recall, someone wrote a rather tender short story about two graduate students living together in Berkeley; at night they would get into bed and read Noah Danzig aloud before making love. Their choice was meant to suggest their high intelligence and sensitivity, soulfulness, depth.

"Sure," I told the editor at the *Times Book Review*, "I wouldn't mind doing a piece on Noah Danzig. Fill me in on the details."

The editor obtained Noah's unlisted number in Chicago, and when I called we agreed to meet at the Whitehall Club in the Whitehall Hotel, just west of Michigan Avenue on Delaware. From gossip I had understood that Noah Danzig could be as touchy as a fresh burn, as suspicious as a rich widow, and as mean as a slum rat. He was at the time coming off a painful divorce, which couldn't have increased his cheerfulness. Everything I had heard about him warned me to tread lightly. He was said, moreover, truly to dislike giving interviews, but for some reason he agreed to make an exception in my case. (In my *New Yorker* essay I bring up Noah's tremendous hunger for attention of any kind, all pursued under the guise of despising the vulgar glare of publicity. He would turn up, for example, at some suburban department store to sign copies of a new novel long after he was beyond needing the money, or speak to thirty or so older Jewish women who had a reading group in Skokie. "A Rare Visit with Noah Danzig," the *Times Book Review* titled my piece; all told, as I note in my *New Yorker* essay, over the years there were to be no fewer than 235 such "rare visits" in print.) I was, then, a bit nervous about this meeting with a writer who somehow made it seem that he was a much-put-upon man trying to get a job of work done, and to whom I, in my immense admiration for him, did not want to seem just another of the world's many nuisances.

From scores of photographs of him that I had seen, Noah Danzig was unmistakably himself walking into the quiet lobby of the Whitehall. He was tall and sinewy, yet seemed somehow fragile. He had penetrating blue eyes, yet was otherwise dark. He was quite bald, yet, owing to the bushiness of his eyebrows, the thick black hair on the backs of his hands and wrists, and a beard that must have required shaving twice daily, he gave the impression of hairiness. Every feature of his face bore its own odd complexity. His scalp, for example, was furrowed and mottled. His eyes were hooded. One of his front teeth was slightly longer than the other. And Gogol would have greatly enjoyed describing his thin, high-bridged nose with its large and dark nostrils, faintly quivering, as if taking the scent of something vaguely disgusting. The general effect, which would intensify as he grew into old age, was like some prehistorical version of a Jewish eagle. It was a face that from every tissue and cell proclaimed: I am of abnormal sensitivity; I am long-suffering and great-souled; I am (to quote Henry James, whom Noah, by the way, never thought much of) "that queer monster, the artist, an obstinate finality, an inexhaustible sensibility."

Noah Danzig had a cold, and, as was plain from the expression on his face as he entered the lobby, he expected the world to be ready with plenty of Kleenex and sympathy. His great quivering, bony, black-holed nose was dark red at its tip. It was nearly the same color as the maroon of his tie and matching socks. He was wearing a checked suit, with sharply cut lapels and small, high pockets cut into the trousers. The effect was lavish but somehow resembled the combination of a best man at a lower-middle-class wedding and a racetrack tout. I walked up to introduce myself.

"As you can see," he said, "I have this lousy cold. I may have to break things off in the middle of lunch." He shook my hand absent-mindedly, rather weakly; no evidence on his part of enthusiasm or even mild curiosity. His cold seemed to absorb all his energy and interest. He was then in his mid-fifties, I in my early thirties.

Given this dreary beginning, the lunch itself went rather better than I expected. I told him right off that I greatly admired his novels, that they had the power of changing the way I looked at the world. When I mentioned other contemporary novelists, he was very forthcoming in his put-downs. The chunky Jewish novelist who threatened to bring about a revolution in the consciousness of our time was, according to Noah, a perfect

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little *clichémeister*. In answer to my query about two brothers who were critics and editors in New York, he replied, "Oh, you mean Frank and Jessie?" An ambitious Southern novelist he described as a discount-house Faulkner trying to live out a pathetic Scott Fitzgerald scenario. The young writer who had just produced an enormous *succès de scandale* with a book about masturbation was no more than "a bright boy" who at least in this case showed "hands-on experience." So it went. I set up the pins, Noah bowled 'em over.

Somehow, without his having to say so, it was understood that none of these harsh opinions was for publication. "We seem to have an immediate sense of *rappaport*," he joked, establishing our Jewish connection. "By keeping my mouth closed, by saying nothing, it looks like I may yet wind up winning the public-relations derby for novelists." I took this remark to have the collateral meaning that he rather counted on me not to write anything that would damage the general view of him as well above the petty traffic of literary reputation and interested only in the large questions of the human spirit.

As we were leaving the Whitehall, weaving our way across its crowded floor, Noah ran into a man he knew but who didn't seem to know him.

"You don't remember me?" he said, astonished. "We had dinner here, in this same room, with your daughter not more than six weeks ago." The man looked puzzled. "You've blocked it out," Noah said, laughing. "Amazing!"

Out on Delaware, walking toward Michigan, Noah explained that he had met the man at a party given by a couple connected with the Lyric Opera. "I have this weakness for people who speak lots of foreign languages," he said, "and this guy speaks four or five of them rather well. Anyhow, he tells me that his daughter, who's a senior at Radcliffe and a big admirer of mine, would love to meet me. So we set up a date for dinner for the three of us at the Whitehall. We're having drinks before dinner arrives, and he begins to tell me how interesting Shakespeare is in German—how much more interesting, in fact, than in English. He goes on and on about it. For fifteen, maybe twenty minutes worth. Finally, I'd had enough. 'Look,' I said to him. 'I'm sorry to have to say this with your daughter at the table, but I don't think I can take any more of this German-Jewish bullshit right now, so why don't you just knock it off?' "

"What did you do then? Walk out?"

"No," said Noah. "Why should I? He invites me to dinner, why should I leave just because he proves a bore? But I have to admit that what I said did put a bit of chill on the wine." He smiled his expansive, long-toothed smile.

I DO NOT have a copy of the piece I wrote for the *Times Book Review*, but I recall it as being close to the kind of piece Noah Danzig might have written about himself, if he could have done so under a disguised name. It made him out to be an immensely winning man, charming and brilliant, a writer working quietly but persistently against the shoddy grain of his age, a soul struggling on behalf of all of us to rediscover the permanence of meaning in a world that has slipped its moorings—or some such overblown nonsense. The *Times* bought it, and I suppose a number of people who read it did, too.

The week after my elegant puffery appeared in print, Noah called to ask if I were free for dinner on Thursday, two nights hence. There was a Greek restaurant he was partial to, the Greek Islands it was called, and he had a friend, a woman, who, having read my piece, wanted to meet me. I said Thursday was fine.

"Do you mind dining Chicago style?" he asked.

"Chicago style?"

"At six o'clock," he said, a smile in his voice.

"Fine with me," I said. "I take it that it's bring your own sleeveless undershirt and peach edition of the *Herald-Examiner*."

He laughed. I remember feeling gratified at being able to make Noah Danzig, himself no mean comedian, laugh.

I met Noah and his friend Sally Nussdorf in the dark and dinful Greek Islands.

"Oh," she said, putting out a hand, "I expected a much older man." Then she laughed. "God, what a line! From what terrible old movie do you suppose I picked it up?"

I liked her right off. She was dark, stocky, with fierce, almost savage, probably dyed red hair growing low on her forehead and the thick features of the Eastern European Jewish working class. To put it in Chicago parlance, if Sally had been a man, she would have played third base in softball and been a helluva handball player. Yet she carried herself as if she were a great beauty. And, strange to report, before long one began to take her at her own valuation, at least while the lights were down and the room shadowy. Sally was able to bring this off, I decided, through sheer energy and intellectual vivacity.

When the waiter brought our steaming food—thick loin chops for Sally, an enormous plate of roast chicken for Noah, an impressive shish kebab for me—Noah, surveying all this grub, remarked, "They certainly don't spare the horses here."

"Dear me," Sally said, "let's hope they do."

Perhaps I was obtuse, but it was not immediately clear to me that she and Noah were lovers. I am still not certain that during this time they were. He treated her with kindly good humor, but also with a certain careful distance. Although Sally was nearer my own age than Noah's, there was, I sensed, no attempt at matchmaking on anyone's part. It was, moreover, plain that she adored him. How he felt about her was what was difficult to fathom. As I subsequently learned, they had indeed once been lovers, though over the past three years Sally Nussdorf had had bad bouts of cancer of the breast and cervix.

One of the recurring complaints made by critics of Noah Danzig's fiction was that he wasn't very

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good with women characters. Here the work and the life fused nicely. It wasn't that he didn't care. He was sexually prideful. He once told me that a young lesbian approached him to propose that he father the child she and her lover wanted to raise, the two having decided they admired his genetic endowment. Another time he mentioned that his physician told him his prostate was in remarkably good repair for a man of fifty-seven. Fame, especially artistic fame, can be a splendid aphrodisiac, and Noah seemed to want to take advantage of his resources in this line whenever possible. But I was often surprised to discover how ultimately unambitious he was on this front, despite a persistent flirtatiousness. He just didn't seem to get, at least in my view, dollar value. His fame ought to have brought him dazzling and fascinating women, but among the seven or eight he coupled with during the time I knew him, all had rather emphatic flaws: they were hopelessly neurotic or shy or witless or idiotically subservient to him. He seemed to be searching for uncritical adoration, but was unable to find even that. No wonder Noah Danzig couldn't create convincing women—he knew so few.

But I wasn't interested in Noah because of his power or ineptness with women. I was interested in him because in those days I thought him a great writer—easily the best writer of his day in the most important literary form of the century. All the heroes of his novels were plainly himself, got up in various wigs, false noses and glasses, taped-on mustaches, and other easily penetrated disguises; and people who knew Noah from the old days claimed they could point out a real-life counterpart for nearly every one of his subordinate characters: the smarmy lawyer of *Tigerman's Fallacy* was based on a local show-business lawyer who had his office at One North LaSalle Street; the emasculating blonde in *Lapidus & Sons* was in fact married to an administrator at Northwestern University; the corrupt cop in *Mr. Horowitz Takes a Holiday* was someone he was later to introduce me to; and so forth. And if he invented no characters, his plots, where they could be said to exist at all, were absurd. Yet despite all this, there was an extraordinary virtuosity in his fiction. A virtuoso, I had come to conclude, is what Noah Danzig really was, a kind of Jascha Heifetz of literature. When one went to hear Heifetz play Beethoven, after all, it was more for the Heifetz than for the Beethoven. Similarly, one read a Danzig novel less for the normal pleasures of fiction than to watch Noah perform on the page.

His greatest invention was of course the character of Noah Danzig, amusing, sensitive, comic, gallant, questing, self-abasing, deep, charming, generous, bumbling, and by the end of each novel somehow a little wiser than when he set out. It was through this character, putatively the author himself, that Noah was able to develop the intimacy with his readers that his fiction seemed so often to call forth. Like the writer famously referred to in *The Catcher in the Rye*, Noah Danzig established himself as someone you wished to telephone after finishing one of his books.

Now, in my case, there was the added pleasure that Noah Danzig began frequently to telephone me. I lived in Hyde Park in those days, he on Cedar, off Rush Street. He would pick me up in the afternoons—he wrote in the mornings, as I did, too—and we would tool around town in his powder-blue, humpbacked Volvo, visiting the haunts of his boyhood and young manhood. Despite what at times seemed his world-weariness, a large part of him remained a Chicago wiseguy, the drugstore cowboy from Marshall High School. This part could emerge at any time. Once, while we were riding down from his apartment, the elevator stopped for a young man with shoulder-length black hair, dark beard, and dark eyes. "Ah, Rasputin," said Noah, who clearly had never seen him before, "what do you hear from the Tsarina?" Another time, driving along in the Volvo near Maxwell Street, he honked at a young black boy on a bike who refused to leave the middle of the street; he honked again, then a third and a fourth time. When the boy finally pulled over, Noah, rolling down his window, called out, "What's a matter, son? Don'tcha believe in death?" I remember asking him if he wanted to go with me to see an Ingmar Bergman film. "No thanks, kid," he said, "I prefer my Kierkegaard straight." At the Art Institute, passing a large painting of Judith carrying the severed head of the Assyrian general Holofernes, he stopped, pointed didactically, and looking at me with sternness said, "Let that be a lesson to you, son. Don't ever screw around with a Jewish girl."

Not everything was jokey. Noah could be very touching about old friends who had been taken out of the game by death. (I later came to think that the only way to earn his permanent regard was to die, rather a high price to pay.) He could cut through much nonsense with admirable economy. I once told him about some outrageous act on the part of a writer we both knew, and remarked that such behavior bespoke an astonishing insecurity. "Why say 'insecurity'?" he replied. "Why not choose a good old-fashioned word like 'cowardice' or 'swinishness'? 'Insecurity' implies that such crummy behavior has an excuse, when it really doesn't. Let us call a spade a spade, a schmuck a schmuck." One windy afternoon we were walking along the Grant Park side of Michigan Avenue when Noah told me, quite without provocation or even transition, that he regretted not having put more time and energy into his private life—he had had two failed marriages—into family and friendships, but he had early learned that such time and energy as were available to him were entirely consumed by the work on his novels. I felt honored to hear that confession.

Around this time Noah began reading to me from *Hochfelder's Revenge*, his novel then in

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progress. Usually he would do so at dusk, seated on a green leather couch before the windows in the small living room of his Cedar Street apartment. The crepuscular light streamed over his shoulder, his half-glasses rested on his complicated nose ("one of the chosen noses," he called it), his face was intensely, even beautifully, concentrated on the typescript pages in his long and bony fingers. The best readers not only see but hear the words, said Robert Frost, and so, too, naturally, do the best writers. Part of Noah's magic was that you couldn't read him without also hearing him, even had you never met him, so distinct was the sound of his prose.

I was much impressed by the patience with which he worked on this book, adding and throwing out large chunks. Here was the serious care of the genuine artist, tireless at getting things exactly right. As I sat there, drinking in Noah's well-made sentences, hilarious physical descriptions, happy formulations of subtle emotional states, I again felt honored—honored and privileged to be in this room listening to this man. How was it that Baudelaire described his relationship with Delacroix: respect on my side, kindness on his? Now, when I read that I feel that only a young man as drunk on literature as I could have been so stupid.

We were sitting at Gene & Georgetti's, a locally famous steak joint on Franklin Street, amid the tumult of lawyers, commodities-market guys, and ad-agency characters dining, in high Chicago fashion, on red meat in the company of tan women. Neither Noah nor I had a tan woman, but two very serious planks of medium-rare strip steak lay on our plates. We were chatting amiably, speculating on the spiritual lives of the people sitting near us. At one point a dark and heavyset man, who looked as if he had to shave every portion of his face but his teeth and eyeballs, walked past gripping the arm of a rather striking redhead.

"Women," said Noah, his mouth filled with steak, "are amazing. They will do anything. You saw that guy who just walked out? If I were a woman, I'd as lief lie down with a grizzly bear."

As we carved and chewed away at our steaks, I mentioned that I had run into Sally Nussdorf at Marshall Field's earlier in the week.

"Ah," said Noah, extracting a metal toothpick from a small leather packet, and, covering his mouth with his left hand, digging away at some bit of steak. "Ah, Sally, the working-class queen."

I said that I liked her. She seemed to me full of wit and energy.

"And depression," Noah added. He went on to tell me that Sally had apparently expected him to marry her, which he thought was quite nuts. Everything in the air nowadays worked against marriage, women had come unhinged, sex was hanging everywhere, like salamis in a delicatessen, a man had to be bonkers even to consider marrying. "Besides," he said, a cold glint in his eye, "I would never marry a woman who has lived so near death."

I puzzled over that remark for a long while afterward.

I DON'T want to give the impression that Noah Danzig and I were constant companions. When he was in Chicago I usually saw him once, sometimes twice a week. But there were long stretches when he was out of the country. His growing fame regularly brought him invitations to spend three or four weeks in this cultural institute in Seville, or that center in Jerusalem, or another institute in Bellagio, or he would be off to a conference on modern literature in Kyoto, or be part of a writers' delegation to the Soviet Union. In all these places he offered minor variations on the same theme—that the artist in modern society had been made into an utterly dispensable figure, irrelevant, a mere clown and jester, of no importance, with no place to rest his head. I once heard him do this turn in Chicago, at a luncheon, to which he managed to have me invited, for bankers, real-estate developers, and high-level corporation executives. Noah was picked up in a limousine, fed smoked salmon and filet mignon, and paid a speaker's fee of five grand, for which he told his audience that in a bustling commercial city such as Chicago the artist, yea, verily, had no place to rest his head. Afterward, Noah rested his, and I mine alongside, on the soft leather seats of the Mercedes limo that took us back to his apartment.

Like a number of contemporary writers I have known, Noah was not much for correspondence. When he was abroad, I would occasionally bat off a note to him containing a bit of literary gossip or comedy about our fair city. Sometimes, if I read something that really impressed me, I would make mention of it or, if it were brief, send along a copy with my letter. In this line I recall sending him a remarkable memoir by Nathan Asch about Asch's painful relationship with his father, the international best-selling novelist Sholem Asch. It was an immensely moving, I thought quite wrenching piece of writing about the unmitigable absence of understanding, despite much love, between a father and son, and the heavy psychological burden of growing up under a famous father. Sadder still, I learned that Nathan Asch had died shortly after this memoir was published—making it seem as if he had had to fire off this last shot, bellow this final *cri de coeur*, before departing the earth.

Perhaps it was a mistake to send the memoir to Noah. He had, I knew, two daughters from a marriage made in his twenties. These girls had grown up in Los Angeles with their mother, who had soon remarried. My sense was that Noah did not see much of his daughters, both of whom were past thirty, not now, not ever. Between them they had four children of their own, which made Noah a grandfather, a *zaydeh*. Yet the idea must have been slightly appalling to him. No one seemed

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less grandfatherly than Noah, who carried himself as if he were a perpetual forty-two, old enough to be well seasoned but not yet fatigued.

Perhaps, though, the Nathan Asch memoir rubbed his own sense of guilt as a failed Jewish father. In any case, he wrote back that he quite understood the motives and situation of the old man, while the son, Nathan, was like everyone else nowadays—a man with a case. Specifically, Nathan Asch wished to take his case, which was against his father, who after all only wanted to get his work done as best he was able, into that most severe of tribunals, children's court, where all parents are adjudged guilty and damned. No, Noah's heart went out to Sholem Asch, who at least didn't write essays about what a miserable ingrate his son was. The son's whining, Noah thought, though impressive, was far from original.

I thought Noah's reading of this memoir itself highly original, especially given his own long-standing interest in family life. In his early novels, Noah wrote about these half-savage Chicago Jewish families, coarsened by corruption, driven mad by money, sprung loose by pretension and foul ideas in later generations, but who through it all retained some rugged, unbreakable link with family feeling, which ran so deep among some of them that it gave them their own, almost primordial depth and density. They knew their duty; they knew why they were here; they knew, despite a zillion distractions, what life was supposed to be about. But did their creator? Did Noah Danzig, pen out of his hand, know what life was supposed to be about?

How could he not have known and yet have written so convincingly about those who did? It seemed a naive question to ask. Yet the more I thought about Noah, the more insistent it became. It remained the chief question about Tolstoy, who wrote so beautifully about the sweetness of family life among the Rostovs and the Levins, all the while driving everyone in his own family at Yasnaya Polyana nuts with his harebrained notions of education, property, chastity, diet. At a vastly reduced level, there was Noah, writing so touchingly about West Side Chicago paterfamiliases' love for their undeserving children, while this same man, a *zaydeh* no less, makes a jackass out of himself trying to get the attention of a woman thirty years younger than he with knockout legs on a Michigan Avenue bus.

For a long while I fought the idea that it was all a fake, a trick, a piece of hypocrisy available only to artists. I worked hard to square this central contradiction. A Noah Danzig, I would tell myself, while portraying true family feeling was in fact expressing his own deep inward yearning. To make such yearnings real was one of the things that artists did; what they couldn't have, they could at least on paper create. Perhaps if they had such things in their own lives, there would be no need to create them in the first place. Art grew out of deprivation, which was itself one of the miracles of art. Or so I told myself. What a chump!

A chump I should have been perfectly content to remain, discovering subtler and subtler causes for the central contradictions between the behavior and ideals of certain artists, espousing ever-more elaborate ideas of artistic creation, had not I, some sixteen or so months later, in the finished pages of *Hochfelder's Revenge*, come across a man of apparently endless ambition eating very rare steak with his bare hands in a Chicago steak joint. Permit me to quote from the pages of that novel:

> His chin awash in grease from steak and sauteed mushrooms, bits of red meat adhering to the spaces between his small, sharp front teeth, Feldman, unsatiated still, now picked up the large T-shaped bone with both fists and began to gnaw. He gave off a low hum as he chomped, moist fists adapting their grasp as if playing some primitive, slightly bloody harmonica. His upper lip glistened with juice, his small teeth working systematically up and down, intent, it would appear, on marrow, Feldman was pure carnivore, a meat-eater and, one was prepared to believe, a man-eater, too. One felt one was watching a scene from a film entitled *One Million B.C.* done in modern dress; one felt, even so late in the game, rather sorry for the poor dead steer; one felt, finally, here was a dangerous young beast, determined to devour whatever lay astride in his path.

Funny, somehow Noah had neglected to read that passage to me in the dusk at his Cedar Street apartment. Could it have anything to do with the fact that I was, as I learned the further I got into the novel, meant to be the model for Morty Feldman? My own teeth, to be sure, are large and rather square, and I do not pick up steak bones in public places; but there were other identifying marks, too minute, boring, unmistakable, and painful to go into here, all pointing to a portrait of me as something of an updated Sammy Glick, a man who, taking no prisoners, leaving no hostages to sentiment, will do anything to get ahead. And by anything let me hasten to mention that Noah included walking away from a vivacious working-class woman who has had a horrendous bout with cancer after he—not Noah Danzig, you understand, but this lowlife Morty Feldman—has been her lover, used her badly, and then has refused to make any permanent connection with her. In the signed copy of *Hochfelder's Revenge* that Noah sent to me, he wrote, "Not everything in this book is, I know, going to be to your liking, but please believe it is the best that an old general practitioner can do."

Maybe twenty or thirty people in the world would ever know that I was the model for Morty Feldman in *Hochfelder's Revenge*. True, to me these were twenty or thirty important people, but I could get over that. What I couldn't get over so easily was the sense of betrayal. A wretched little hustler, a blind fool on the make, a full-out creep,

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was this what Noah Danzig thought of me during the many (I had until now thought) comradely afternoons we had spent in each other's company? Or was I ever in his company in any real sense at all?

WHY DID Noah do it? He worked from life, everyone knew that about him, but I had supposed I would be an exception, a friend he wouldn't use for fodder. I believed in the authenticity of his intimacy; I believed our friendship meant enough to him not to sacrifice it so cheaply on a secondary character in a less than first-rate novel. I was wrong to believe all these things. You can't play with a dangerous cat and expect to come away unscathed.

Noah was away when *Hochfelder's Revenge* appeared—in the south of France, if memory serves, living in the house of a Chicago wholesale car leaser—and I was just as glad he was and I didn't have to worry about running into him. Instead I wrote a carefully composed, rather brief letter, telling him how disappointed I was to find myself a particularly unpleasant character in one of his novels, that I thought our friendship might have meant more than it apparently did to him, and that I found the entire business depressing in the extreme. Some four weeks later I received a postcard from France telling me not to take it so hard and that, who knew, somewhere down the road I might have a chance to get my own back at him, signed "As ever—Noah."

We never met again. I watched his career henceforth from far back in the stands, not wishing him one bit well. In his sixties, Noah continued to garner prizes, both here and in Europe, so many that he began to seem a bit posthumous, even though he continued to produce at the same slow and steady rate of a novel every four or five years. When a new book appeared, front pages of the book reviews were set aside and reviewers lined up to praise him. There was a continuing flow of "rare" visits by journalists. Although his novels never became quite booming best-sellers—they were too cerebral, a touch too difficult and self-indulgent for that—they were often taught in universities and he was widely translated. Money, I assume, was never a serious problem.

And yet despite what appeared to be the even flow of Noah Danzig's success—the perfect portrait of the author ascending gracefully into old age and mature wisdom—one sensed that something was beginning to go slightly wrong. The praise was still there, but it began to feel rather perfunctory. When younger critics wrote about the current literary scene, the name Noah Danzig no longer came up. He had ceased to speak to the age, in the way he once seemed to have done—his obsessions seeming to be ours as well. Nor could he be said to speak to the ages. The once reliable virtues of the old virtuoso were not much in demand. Approaching seventy, Noah published *Freifeld's Fiasco*, a work clearly meant to be his magnum opus on old age and death. It was vastly disappointing; in it one discovered that all Noah Danzig had to say was that he hated growing older and was terrified of death. The whining was impressive, as he might have said, but nothing very original here.

On three or four occasions, I was asked to write about Noah, but of course I refused. Two academics, each doing studies of him, approached me for information. I told them that I hadn't any, adding that I had stopped reading him years ago. I was patient. I waited. My time would arrive.

I was reading in bed, listening to music on WFMT, the chief classical-music station in Chicago, when at the ten o'clock news break, the station announced the death, in London, of a heart attack, of the novelist Noah Danzig at age seventy-nine. The next day's New York *Times* carried an obituary on its front page. I read it slowly with my coffee, poured myself another cup, then went into my small study, where I began writing "Imperfection of the Life and the Work."

Normally, I write in longhand, later transferring what I have written into typed copy. But this time my mind was working too fast for my pen. Links, connections, comparisons, analogies, metaphors came at me with a tornado-like whoosh. I composed directly on the typewriter. I didn't stop for lunch. Working from eight that morning till five-thirty that evening, I produced 10,000 words, very few of which later needed any serious revision. That night my sleep was fitful. My mind was crowded with fresh observations, insights, angles of approach. Seven or eight different times I had to leave my bed to take notes; twice I had to get up to walk off my excitement.

In writing this essay, I began for the first time to feel that I understood the means by which art was created. It was created, I sensed, in one of two ways: through the force of great character, which made it authentic; or through the imitation of great character, which, however grand and glittering it might for a while seem, made it always and ultimately a cheat. I cannot rewrite my entire essay here, but what I chiefly did in it was to expand upon Van Wyck Brooks's notion that literature was a Great Man Writing, except that I enlarged considerably the notion of what constituted a Great Man beyond Brooks's rather straight-laced one. The Great Man might be neurotic (Proust, Kafka, Joyce), or chaotic (Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Balzac), and on occasion even orderly and obvious in his good character (Goethe, Henry James, Chekhov), but always there was a largeness that never cheapened itself, never asked for special dispensation for being an artist, never viewed life as being useful above all for the creation of art. It was not difficult to go on to demonstrate that, by these criteria, Noah Danzig, being no great man, produced something a good deal less than great art. Art, I claimed in my essay, had its own morality, its own severe tests, and Noah, I proved by deft quotation and neatly formulated assertion, failed them all.

The completed essay ran to 26,000 words. I

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wrote and revised the entire piece in five days, on intellectual fire the full time. It all went smoothly, pure sailing on ice. Quotations from the novels seemed to be at my fingertips. Arguments that had never even dimly occurred to me before now arose exactly where and when I required them. During these five days of composition, I resented having to take time out for meals or sleep; normal hygiene seemed an irritating distraction. I rose each morning and went directly to my desk. It was as if the words were waiting for me—and had been waiting for nearly twenty years. Late on the afternoon of the fifth day—a day on which, in my passion to be done, I neither showered nor shaved—I typed out the famous lines from Yeats's "The Choice" ("The intellect of man is forced to choose/Perfection of the life, or of the work"), then wrote that Noah Danzig, having too early chosen the latter, completely spoiled the former, which in turn made achieving the latter impossible, thus rendering both his life and his work sadly, perishably trivial. I pushed my chair back from my typing table. There, Noah, I said aloud, after all these years we are even at last.

Vengeance, the Italians say, is a dish best served cold. After my Noah Danzig article apeared in the *New Yorker*, I received something like a hundred and thirty letters about it, all but two or three agreeing with my general line of argument. Some people wrote to say that they had never understood all the fuss about Noah's obviously self-glorifying fiction in the first place. A critic who was an exact contemporary of Noah's wrote to say that what he found so troubling about the later novels was their repeated and boring insistence on his, Noah's, own virtue and spirituality; as my essay "masterfully" (his own word) showed, Noah had to insist on his virtue and spirituality because he himself possessed neither. A friend in New York wrote to say that my essay was causing a tremendous stir in intellectual circles there. "The general consensus is that you have finished the old boy off for good."

It was time now to get back to other work. I had been reading for a little book on the politics of André Gide, and now intended to return to it. Certainly I had no intention of making a career out of attacking Noah Danzig. In writing my essay on him, I felt I was telling the truth as I knew it, saying an interesting thing or two about the sources of serious literary art, and along the way putting paid to a little debt that had been building in me for a number of years. It was over, done, and time now to move on.

It was in Paris, where I had gone to do further research for my Gide book, that I had my first Noah dream. Dream, which implies story or bits of plot, is perhaps too grand a word. What occurred was that in the middle of otherwise quite normal sleep, Noah Danzig's face appeared, his luminous blue eyes staring out coldly at me. It happened again, on the flight back from Paris to Chicago, only this time Noah's head was shaking slowly, remorselessly, admonishingly. I must have cried out, for a stewardess, gently touching my arm to wake me, asked if I were all right.

Back in Chicago Noah's face, the asymmetrical teeth, the complicated nose with the dark nostrils, the mottled and furrowed scalp, and always the cold blue-eyed stare, was appearing almost nightly in my sleep. The head never spoke. I read its look to mean that it had been done a serious injury, felt it had been foully wronged.

I must have reread my *New Yorker* essay ten or twelve times to determine if I had been unfair to Noah. It was strong stuff, no question about that; no one would ever say that it was in any sense "balanced," yet in writing it "balance" was hardly what I was after. I began with a sense of personal injury, true enough, but that injury I took to be an objective sign of bad character in an author that led me to discover the effects of bad character running throughout his work. My purpose was to show the connection between character and art, to prove the point that without largeness of character there could be no authenticity of art. I was correct about all this. I had no regrets.

Yet why did Noah's face, his forbidding, disapproving, injured face, continue to appear in my sleep? It did so nightly now, causing me to get up for good, no matter what the hour. Insomnia gave me more time to dwell on the puzzle: what did Noah want? Had he not himself suggested, after I had accused him of the worst possible faith in using me so badly, that I would doubtless one day have a chance to get even? Was he telling me that I had gotten more than even, that I had gone too far? This was all quite nuts, of course. I realized that. But the realization did not help me to find sleep; it didn't keep Noah's cold blue eyes from haunting my dreams. What's the good of knowing you're crazy even if, with this self-knowledge, you remain crazy?

Work on my Gide book was out of the question. Such literary journalism as came my way went undone, not helping my reputation for reliability. (Fortunately, I had my large fee from the *New Yorker* to live on.) I lined up Noah's nine novels and three collections of stories alongside the chair in my living room in which I did most of my reading, and, bleary-eyed from lack of sleep, I would riffle through them at all hours, looking for some passage that would explain what was going on and perhaps free me from this craziness. I was drinking lots of Cokes and coffee; most days I didn't bother to get dressed. After eighteen years away from them, I began to smoke cigarettes again.

I never found the secret passage. What I did decide, though, through the blear of sleeplessness, the caffeine, the nicotine of more than sixty cigarettes a day, and the stink of my own unkempt body, was that I had badly misjudged Noah Danzig. I took him for a man, when he was instead that quite different thing, an artist—less than a

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great one, to be sure, but psychologically a perfect type. For such a man there are no ethics, only aesthetics. The complete artist was like the complete politician—interested only in the omelette, not the eggs that had to be sacrificed to make it. But the larger point, I began to see, was that the more complete the artist the less complete the man. Men didn't come much more incomplete than Noah. I shouldn't have been angry at being ill-used by him; my mistake was obviously in assuming him capable of friendship to begin with. My mistake was in assuming that Noah Danzig was human.

I was on to something here. It was a bit of a blur, a touch hazy, but worth pursuing. I urgently felt the need to talk this over with someone, and as soon as possible. I needed to lay it all out, to check my thoughts in the company of someone more objective than I to see if my conclusions made any sense. I hadn't been out of the apartment in weeks, except to buy groceries and cigarettes. I had been brooding on this alone for much too long.

NEXT thing I knew I was sitting on a stool in a sports bar on Addison Avenue. The bartender, a brawny fellow with weight-lifter's arms and wearing a basketball ref's shirt, asked if he could help me.

"A plain glass of vodka with a little ice," I said. "And by the way, do you read many novels?"

"Not many," he said, setting the vodka before me. Television sets played all around the room, different games in flow. Backboards with baskets were on the walls; also lots of college pennants and photographs of athletes. A heavy punching bag was set up in a far corner.

"Ever hear of a guy who writes novels named Noah Danzig?" I asked.

"Can't say as I have," he said. "But look, old buddy, can you excuse me for a minute?" He picked up a phone behind the bar and tapped out a number. I sipped my vodka, and in my fatigue my shaking hands caused me to spill a little. Jesus, I thought, looking down, what am I doing here in my bathrobe? Then I noted that under it I had on pajamas, and was also wearing house slippers whose bent backs caused me a momentary stab of shame. Strange, I thought.

"Anyhow, old buddy," said the bartender, now returned, "you were about to tell me about reading novels or something."

"Ever read a story called 'Tonio Kröger'?" I asked.

"Can't say as I have," he repeated.

"Too bad. It would tell you nearly everything you need to know about Noah," I said.

"Would it really?" he said.

I felt vaguely that he was humoring me, but I had to be careful. I knew I was in a shaky condition here. Mustn't make snap judgments. Besides, the main thing was to set out what I thought I had now discovered and where, exactly, I had gone wrong.

"This guy I'm talking about has been dead for a while, but he keeps showing up in my dreams. It's made hell of my life, I can tell you. I haven't had a good night's sleep in months. But that's not the important thing. What is. . . ." And just as I was going into my rather elaborate explanation, two young policemen, one white with a thick mustache, the other a black man, were standing on either side of my stool.

"How're you doin', pal?" the cop with the mustache said.

"A little tired, but otherwise pretty good," I said. "How about yourself, officer?"

"Why don't you let us take you where you can get a little rest?" said the other cop.

"Sure," I said, conscious that in these clothes I had better go easy with these guys, "but has either of you ever heard of a fellow named Danzig?"

"Played second base for the old St. Louis Browns?" the cop with the mustache asked.

"Not exactly."

"Look," said the other, the black cop. "Why don't we get out of here. Go someplace where we can talk?"

As the three of us left the bar, my slippers made a flapping sound against the floor. Odd that I hadn't noticed it when I came in. Each of the cops grasped me firmly by the upper arms. In the car, the black cop drove, the cop with the mustache sat with me in the back.

"God," I said, "I forgot to pay for my drink."

"Don't worry, pal," the cop with the mustache said, "we took care of it for you. Why don't you tell me more about this guy Danson from the old St. Louis Browns you mentioned?"

"Not Danson," I said, "Danzig. He wasn't a ballplayer. He was a novelist. And do you mind not calling me 'pal'?"

"Kinda touchy, ain't ya, friend?"

"Go to hell," I said, and then—it must have been the caffeine, the nicotine, the vodka, the lack of sleep—I did this ridiculous, stupid thing: I slapped him. Not punched, you understand, but slapped. It felt damned effeminate. Who did I think I was? Adolphe Menjou? Clifton Webb?

I recall the cop's rather yellowish teeth smiling out under his thick black mustache, as if to say, "Ah, well, at least this night's not going to be a total loss." The next thing I felt was a tremendous shot to the stomach. I threw up all over him.

"Son of a bitch," he said, clapping me in a hammerlock, "They'll fit you up with a nice snug jacket in a little while now, pal."

And so we drove the few remaining blocks to Louis A. Weiss Memorial Hospital, where, beaten, exhausted, dappled in my own vomit, in a hammerlock, and now missing a slipper, I was bum's-rushed through the emergency room, forced to swallow a pill, and strapped to a gurney on which I was wheeled off to the loony ward.

"Well, Noah, old friend," I recall thinking just before the sedative did its quick work, "I guess we're even again."

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Are We Spending Too Much on AIDS?

Michael Fumento

If there is one thing Americans seem to agree upon about AIDS, it is that we are not spending enough on the disease. "The government has blood on its hands," reads a bumper sticker that is ubiquitous in major cities, "one AIDS death every half hour." AIDS activists, who are fond of asserting that AIDS is "not a homosexual disease," tell us in the same breath that the failure to spend more on it constitutes genocide against homosexuals. A recent public-opinion poll shows, indeed, that most Americans favor increasing spending on AIDS.

But consider. This past year, reported cases of AIDS in the U.S. increased only 9 percent over the previous year's tally. The federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC) of the Public Health Service (PHS) has been forced to lower greatly both its estimate of current infections and its projections of future cases. The World Health Organization, similarly, has lowered its original estimate of as many as 100 million infections by 1990 to a current eight to ten million. New York City, AIDS capital of the nation, has lowered its estimate of current infections from 500,000 to about 150,000.

Nor has the long-expected "breakout" of AIDS into the heterosexual middle class shown any sign of occurring. Former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, who probably coined the expression "heterosexual AIDS explosion," now claims he knew "from the very beginning" that such a thing would never happen; Gene Antonio, author of *The AIDS Cover-Up?* (300,000 copies in print), which predicted as many as 64 million infections by this year, now denies having made such a prediction. At the recent international AIDS conference in San Francisco, Dr. Nancy Padian put another nail in the coffin of the "breakout" theory when she reported the results of her study of 41 couples among whom the woman was originally infected and the man was not: over a period of years, only one man became infected, and that only after both he and his partner had experienced penile and vaginal bleeding on over 100 occasions.

This year, AIDS dropped from being the 14th biggest killer of Americans to number 15. Heart disease this year will kill about 775,000 Americans, a figure perhaps 20 times as high as the number of Americans who will die of AIDS in the next twelve months. In the next two months cancer will kill almost as many people as have died of AIDS in the course of the entire epidemic.

Nevertheless, the *current* PHS allocation of about $1.6 billion for AIDS research and education is higher than that allocated for any other cause of death. In 1990, the CDC will spend $10,000 on prevention and education for each AIDS sufferer as opposed to $185 for each victim of cancer and a mere $3.50 for each cardiac patient. Total federal research expenditures on AIDS this year will be more than 100 percent of nationwide patient costs; in the case of cancer, the corresponding ratio of research-and-development spending to patient costs is about 4.5 percent, in the case of heart disease about 2.9 percent, and in the case of Alzheimer's disease, less than 1 percent.

AIDS activists have answers to these statistics. Since AIDS strikes most often in the prime of life, they urge us to consider the years of lost productivity as a cost that could be avoided by more spending now on AIDS research. Yet every year cancer and heart disease *each* kills more than 150,000 Americans below the age of sixty, while this year AIDS will kill around 30,000 persons of all ages. Nor do the calculations of years lost take account of the fact that intravenous drug abusers, who make up a growing portion of those affected by the disease, have a very low life expectancy and an even lower expectancy of productivity.

But, say AIDS activists, the disease is overwhelming the nation's health-care system, and this alone justifies increased spending on research. A figure repeated often in the media has been the Rand Corporation's estimate that by 1991, direct medical costs for AIDS (that is, medical expenses only, with lost wages not included) could be as high as $133 billion, with up to $38 billion in 1991 alone. *U.S. News & World Report* flatly declared, "What is now becoming clear to an array of leaders—in medicine, business, government, and academia—is that AIDS not only threatens untold death and suffering but could bankrupt America's health system as well." In fact, however, a typical AIDS case costs approximately the same as a terminal cancer case, about $40,000 to $50,000, which means that the 35,000 reported AIDS cases last year will end up costing the nation something less than $2 billion, or considerably less than 1 percent of this year's total U.S. medical costs of approximately $650 billion.

Michael Fumento *is the author of* The Myth of Heterosexual AIDS, *published by New Republic Books. His article, "AIDS: Are Heterosexuals at Risk?,"* appeared in the November 1987 Commentary.

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Of course, localized emergencies can exist. New York City's hospital system, running poorly even before AIDS, is clearly in a state of crisis even though cases in that city have peaked. The reason New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and other such cities have been hit so hard by AIDS is that they are refuges for homosexuals and drug abusers. With that in mind, the House and Senate are seeking to authorize $2.9 billion and $4 billion, respectively, over the next six years, mostly for these hard-hit cities and states. (Ironically, the bill has been cast as emergency relief for *rural* areas, apparently in the belief that voters have more sympathy for the problems of Peoria than for those of San Francisco or New York.) This special allocation for AIDS, which comes on top of an earlier special allocation to subsidize the drug AZT, is almost without precedent. There is nothing similar for people with heart disease or cancer or diabetes or lupus or any number of other potentially fatal diseases (with the exception of end-stage renal disease).

WHAT ABOUT the assertion that AIDS deserves more funding because it is contagious, while heart disease and cancer are not? In fact, AIDS is contagious almost exclusively through behavior, and modification of that behavior could in theory reduce future AIDS cases virtually to zero without another penny spent on research and without a single medical breakthrough. An as-yet uninfected homosexual who avoids high-risk behavior will almost certainly never contract AIDS; but his chance of dying of cancer remains one in five. Indeed, male homosexuals outside of such high-incidence areas as San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York, and whose HIV status is unknown, currently have less chance of getting AIDS than of dying of either heart disease or cancer.

It is said that even if research on AIDS does not yield a cure, spin-offs from that research could lead to cures and treatments for other diseases. In line with this idea, Congressman Ted Weiss (D.-NY) requested the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) to prepare a report titled, "How Has Federal Research on AIDS/HIV Contributed to Other Fields?" The reviewer in the British medical journal *Lancet*, struck by the contrast between this tiny report and OTA's customary "behemoth, exhaustive" efforts, noted that it was comprised of nothing more than opinions from an "unspecified organization of 'distinguished biomedical and social scientists,' " and that "For policy or polemics, this OTA production is a bust."

Nevertheless, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institutes of Allergies and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), a branch of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and long an advocate of increased spending on AIDS, declared that "There's positive spin-offs already and certainly in the next decade or two you'll see more," adding that these included cancer. In fact, no life has ever been saved, no disease ever ameliorated, by AIDS spin-offs. As former NIH director Donald Fredrickson has pointed out, most AIDS research is far too narrowly targeted to lead to significant spin-offs. Indeed, most of the money spent by the PHS on AIDS (including for advertisements on late-night television like the one featuring a man who resolves not to go out on the town and "bring back AIDS to my family") does not involve clinical research at all.

This is not to say that no spin-offs are ever possible. After all, no one knew that the space program would end up introducing the world to velcro. But we did not embark on the space program because we wanted a new kind of fastener. If it is a cure for cancer we seek, we should spend money on cancer research, not on another disease entirely. As it happens, increasing spending on cancer at the expense of spending on AIDS might do more for both diseases: of the first three drugs approved for treatment of AIDS or its conditions, two—AZT and alpha interferon—were spin-offs of cancer research.

Among the deleterious effects of disproportionate spending on AIDS have been inevitable boondoggles, as great a problem in medicine as in national defense. In December 1988, NIAID announced two grants totaling $22.8 million to study non-drug-using heterosexuals in order, as the Associated Press put it, to "prevent a huge new epidemic." Speaking on condition of anonymity, one prominent federal epidemiologist said of the study, "I think it's complete bullshit." He added, "My sense was that a huge amount of money got dumped on NIAID and that by the time they got around to awarding the money a lot of good institutions had already been funded and all that was left was schlock."

CONCENTRATION on AIDS has in general prompted a de-emphasis of other medical diseases like Alzheimer's, a cruel, debilitating malady that will continue to exact an ever-higher yearly toll unless medical intervention becomes possible. Nobody is more conscious of this than researchers themselves. It takes up to a decade to put a high-school graduate through medical school; thus, for now and for the immediate future, AIDS researchers are being drawn from other research areas, primarily cancer, and the rumblings from traditionally non-political laboratories are growing louder and louder. Some are calling it "AIDS Resentment Complex," a play on "AIDS Related Complex." Dr. Vincent T. DeVita, Jr., just before stepping down from his position as director of the National Cancer Institute (NCI), said that AIDS "has been an extraordinary drain on the energy of the scientific establishment." In fact, AIDS research has now weakened cancer research to the point where NCI's ability to fund promising new proposals is lower than at any time in the past two decades.

Two top doctors left NCI in late 1988, partly out of frustration over this state of affairs. According to one of them, Dr. Robert Young, now president of the American Society of Clinical Oncology, "the superstructure of cancer research is being dismantled." Indeed, for non-AIDS work, NIH lost almost 1,100 employees between 1984 and 1989. At the same time, according to *Science* magazine, the number of NIH employees engaged in AIDS work increased by more than 400

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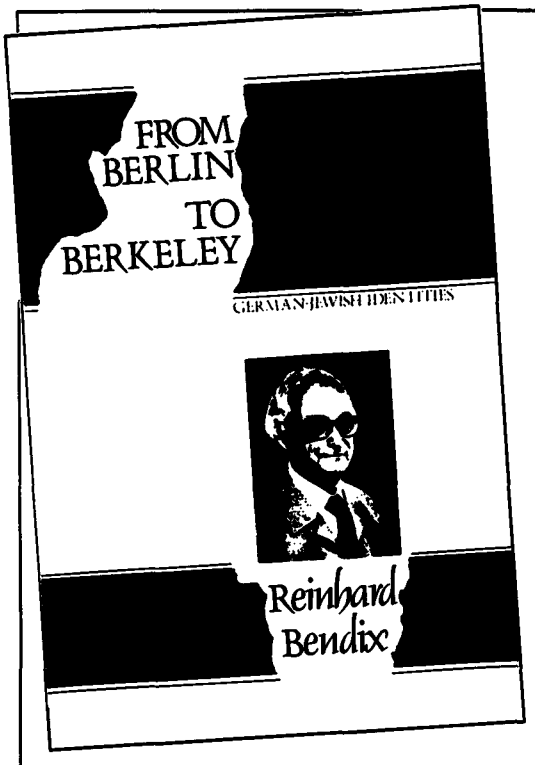
to 580 workers or their full-time equivalents.

The most vocal opposition to spiraling federal AIDS expenditures has probably come from women concerned about breast cancer, which kills about 44,000 a year; every two years as many women die of breast cancer alone as the number of men and women who have died of AIDS over the course of the entire epidemic. True, Congress is now considering bills that would appropriate funds for cancer screening in women, but the total to be allocated for both breast cancer and cervical cancer—the latter kills 6,000 women a year and is virtually always preventable if caught early enough—is only $50 million, as contrasted with the $3 to $4 billion which Congress wants to spend for AIDS treatment programs over the next six years and which will probably not save a single life, from AIDS or anything else.

THE blunt fact is, then, that a great many people will die of other diseases because of the overemphasis on AIDS. We will never know their names and those names will never be sewn into a giant quilt. We will never know their exact numbers. But they will die nonetheless.

Is this right? Should a compassionate society allocate funds and research on the basis of media attention, on the basis of whoever makes the loudest noise? Or should it, rather, put its appropriations where they can do the most good for the greatest number of people?



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Malaise II

THE POLITICS OF RICH AND POOR: WEALTH AND THE AMERICAN ELECTORATE IN THE REAGAN AFTERMATH. By KEVIN PHILLIPS. *Random House. 262 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by JAMES Q. WILSON

JUST when you thought it safe to go into the water again . . . the malaise is back. Ronald Reagan was supposed to have driven a stake through the heart of Jimmy Carter's infamous speech about how bleak was America's future. But no. Malaise II is now appearing in your news magazines (*Time* ran a cover story of George Washington crying), on your airwaves (a recent Dan Rather commentary all but repeated the Carter speech), and in your bookstores (the new book by Kevin Phillips).

Here is a sampling of Phillips's version of malaise: American politics is "bankrupt," "brain dead," "rudderless," "a joke," and on the edge of "developing national unease." The reason? During the Reagan years, and largely because of the Reagan policies, the rich got richer. The people are mad as hell and they won't take it any more, but politicians don't know what to do—they have just "danced around the edges" of the problem. As a consequence, we are on the verge, the dust-jacket blurb promises us, of a "watershed change" in American politics.

Once you get past the op-ed rhetoric, what you find in support of this view is a combination of bad economics, dubious political science, and irresponsible policy advocacy. I do not say that the country faces no economic problems, that politicians are bravely and candidly confronting these problems, or that no major electoral change is in the offing. All I assert is that, despite much arm-waving and the selective use of many statistics, Phillips does not come close to establishing his version of that scenario.

That version runs as follows. First: income inequality increased during the 1980's. Second: Reagan's policies were chiefly responsible for this. Third: having more affluent people is a bad thing. Fourth: smart politicians should follow Phillips's advice and campaign on populist, egalitarian themes. Let's look at each part of the argument.

1. HAVE THE RICH GOTTEN RICHER? Yes. The families whose incomes put them in the top 1 percent reported receiving a bigger share of all income during the 1980's than they had during the 1970's: from 9 percent in 1980 to 11 percent in 1988. Wealth statistics show bigger changes than income data: the number of millionaires (adjusted for inflation) doubled between the late 1970's and the late 1980's. And the inflation in the salaries of the highest-paid corporate executives shows the biggest gain of all: the top CEO in 1981, Mr. Genin of Schlumberger, earned $5.7 million; in 1988, the top man, Mr. Eisner of Walt Disney, earned $40.1 million. To find someone on the 1988 list who earned about the same as Mr. Genin in 1981, you have to go down to the twenty-fourth person.

2. DID REAGAN CAUSE THIS SHIFT? Phillips says yes; I think he fails to prove his case. Worse, he ignores inconvenient facts, is sloppy in the handling of the facts he does adduce, and fails to give serious attention to alternative explanations for this income shift. As to the sloppiness: remember that Ronald Reagan became President in 1981 and that none of his policies, such as the tax and spending cuts, took effect until 1983. The biggest decline in share of family incomes received by the poorest one-fifth of the population took place between 1974 and 1982, when that share dropped by 16 percent. From 1982 to 1988, that decline ended and poorer families held their own.

Thomas Edsall, a liberal writing in the *New Republic*, points out that during the 1980's, "a clear majority of families experienced some increase in both pre-tax and after-tax income." During the Carter years, by contrast, the great majority of families lost ground. Between 1975 and 1981, median family income fell by 3 percent in constant dollars; from 1982 to 1988, it rose by 12 percent. (These calculations are from Phillips's own figures on page 242.) If there was ever a time for Phillips to have written a book pointing out how the government was vulnerable to voters upset by falling incomes, it was 1980. I don't recall his saying a word about the subject then. But even without his advice, the voters took note—they replaced Carter with Reagan.

That most families improved their lot after the Reagan policies were in place does not deny that then the rich began reporting bigger income gains than the not-so-rich. But why did this happen? Phillips gives four answers: the tax cut, changed spending priorities, deregulation, and deficit financing. Bear with me, but it is necessary to wade through each of these in some detail to find out what lies behind Phillips's snappy slogans.

The tax cut: Between 1977 and 1984, tax rates were cut, and the percentage of that cut was greatest for the highest-income brackets. Much of the rate cut enjoyed by the well-to-do came during the *Carter* administration when capital-gains taxes were reduced. But even ignoring this point, a cut in tax *rates* is a meaningless assertion; what we really want to know is how, if at all, tax *payments* changed.

The only way to answer that question is to ask what effect these rate changes had. One effect is indisputable: by 1986 the rich (whether defined as the top 1 percent or the top 0.1 percent) were paying a far bigger share of total personal income taxes than they had five years earlier. By contrast, the share of those taxes paid by the middle class fell. The poor were taken off the federal income-tax rolls altogether.

But, Phillips rejoins, the *burden* of income taxes was actually les-

JAMES Q. WILSON *is the Collins Professor of Management and Public Policy at UCLA. His most recent book is* Bureaucracy (*Basic Books*).

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sened on the rich. Though they paid a bigger share of the total income tax, their incomes had gone up far faster, and so the percentage of their own incomes that went to the IRS was way down. There is no doubt that the reported income on which the rich paid taxes did go up. But Phillips doesn't ask why; instead, he implies that Reagan changed the rules somehow so that the rich were allowed to keep more money.

There is a different explanation, one set forth in some detail by Lawrence Lindsey in his recent book, *The Growth Experiment*. Lowered marginal tax rates induced the rich to report income that they had once either hidden from view or sheltered in various loopholes. Using the actual tax returns of some 34,000 taxpayers in each of six years, Lindsey is able to estimate the income tax that would have been paid by the rich if the rates had not been changed and compare that with what was paid after the rate cut, and to do so under various assumptions about how fast the economy grew. The results are quite striking: the rich paid more taxes after the tax cut than they would have paid without it, and they did so because they were willing now to expose more income to the tax collector that they had once sheltered in tax-free municipal bonds, untaxed fringe benefits, and the passive losses generated by various real-estate deals. The country benefited, because the rich were now paying about one-fourth of the revenue loss that the 1981 tax cut was predicted to generate. Put another way, if the behavior of the rich hadn't changed, then today either the deficit would be much larger, the not-so-rich would be getting fewer benefits, or both.

If this is the case (and Phillips presents nothing that would contradict Lindsey's analysis), then the rich did not get richer because Reaganite policies bent the tax rules in their favor. Quite the contrary: the reductions in the top tax brackets not only paid for themselves, they actually brought in a profit. Moreover, if Lindsey is right, the tax cut stimulated a great deal of economic growth that would not otherwise have occurred. Without that growth, the average family would not have enjoyed as much of the gain in income (if any gain at all) as in fact occurred during the 1980's.

But of course the 1981 cut was not the only tax policy that changed. Social Security taxes were increased. This fell more heavily on the working and middle classes because that tax is regressive. But recall who pressed for increasing the Social Security tax—liberal Democrats. As Paul Light has shown in his history of the 1983 "rescue" of the Social Security system, liberals initially wanted all of the rescue to be financed by tax increases and eventually got a deal in which most but not all of it was so financed. Now that the trust fund is awash in cash, Senator Daniel P. Moynihan would like to repeal part of that tax increase. Curiously, most people in Washington seem embarrassed by the idea. Phillips doesn't mention it.

Budget cuts: There were budget changes, some of which cut programs aimed at the poor, but to understand their magnitude and effect one would have to do a lot more work than Phillips did. His sweeping claim that "decreases in federal social programs" can be measured by the declining share of federal outlays attributable to human resources is quite misleading. What we want to know are the absolute changes in federal spending on means-tested benefits—food stamps, housing assistance, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Medicaid, and the like. Between 1981 and 1984 they increased in constant dollars, though not at as fast a rate as they had under Carter. At the same time, John Weicher observed in his analysis of these changes, the Reagan administration, while it cut some benefits, managed to target more of what was left on the truly poor. The net effect on the lives of the poor is hard to state, but Phillips gives no evidence (and I know of none) that these spending programs contributed to the rich getting richer.

Deregulation: Phillips's treatment of this topic is a hopeless mishmash of irrelevant statistics on the number of pages in the *Federal Register* and the number of corporate mergers, unsupported assertions about the alleged harm to

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safety of deregulating airline and trucking prices, and vague references to the savings-and-loan crisis. In support of his argument that "deregulation favored upper-bracket Americans," the best he can do is to string together scattershot references to how airline deregulation caused unions to suffer (I guess he is referring to the pilots who used to make $100,000 a year when the government prevented airline price competition) and how bank deregulation was bad for the poor (I guess he is referring to the fact that deregulation of interest rates now allowed average depositors to earn the same high rate of interest once available only to big depositors).

The deficit: The federal deficit contributes to the existence of high interest rates. No doubt. Phillips suggests that these rates "made for widening income disparities." He gives no evidence to support this. In fact there is not much. In 1960, when we had high tax rates, the rich naturally took a lot of their income in the form of interest and dividends. (Why work harder when you gave to the IRS ninety cents out of each additional dollar earned?) By 1985, after the tax cut, the percentage of income received by the rich in the form of interest and dividends had been cut in half.

3. Is it bad for more people to be rich? There is an obvious case to be made against the extremes. If one person had 99 percent of the wealth and everybody else shared 1 percent, it would be intolerable. The one person would command so many resources as to leave no barrier to despotic rule. Conversely, if everybody had exactly the same amount of wealth, it would also be intolerable. Strict economic equality in the face of individual differences in talent, energy, and preferences could only be achieved by despotic rule.

But between those extremes, what is the case for any given distribution of wealth or income? There is no objective answer to that question, but it is one about which reasonable discussion is possible. Phillips provides no such discussion; instead, he offers a series of muckraking images: "lavish multimillion-dollar birthday parties" for Malcolm Forbes, "$4 million for Andy Warhol's painting of Marilyn Monroe," lists of billionaires and decamillionaires, "parvenu GOP Washington lobbyists" who "tell attending gossip columnists the price of their new Savile Row suits." Phillips does note, correctly, that income inequality is much higher here than in countries such as Sweden. I wish he had asked why that difference existed, and with what consequences. He would have found the reason to be a powerful state in Sweden and the consequences there to be laziness, expense-account living, capital flight, no net savings, the multiplication of tax shelters, and stagnant economic growth.

Even if Phillips were to make the case that it is wrong for the rich to gain faster than the not-rich, he would still have to ask whether that imbalance brought with it any benefits. It was the question asked by Adam Smith when he wrote *The Wealth of Nations*. Smith wanted to know why societies with little inequality tended to be poor and those with great inequalities tended to be wealthy. The reason, he concluded, was that those nations that unleashed the creative powers of their people would be more prosperous than those that (by mercantilism or socialism) constrained those powers. The price—no, the necessary precondition—of raising the general level of well-being was to allow inequalities in economic attainment.

That still leaves plenty of room for a reasonable discussion of the proper extent of transfer payments and public investments in human capital. Unless Phillips's only goal is to find campaign slogans, then his book is notable for the lack of much serious discussion of the effect of Reagan policies on investment, inflation, and average income. But I suspect that he is chiefly interested in slogans, for his final chapter contains scarcely any discussion of what ought to be done, even assuming all his prior claims are correct. The closest he comes is to suggest that a "new economic patriotism" (meaning what?) is "not unreasonable."

4. Should politicians become populists? In fact, Phillips's book is a campaign tract, not a serious piece of economic analysis. But is it a good tract? He asserts in many places that class politics is good politics, but he never offers any convincing evidence. Historical analogies to the Gilded Age and the Great Depression are not apposite. The big voting shifts then tended to be associated with economic crises and cultural tensions, not income distributions. I wish he had read *Injury to Insult* by Kay Schlozman and Sidney Verba, who describe the *absence* of class polarization during the Depression; perhaps then he would have tempered his conviction that he has found the political Rosetta Stone.

A lot of liberal Democrats would like to believe that hostility toward the bi-coastal rich is the key to electoral success. But so far, most serious analyses of presidential elections suggests that class envy plays very little role in determining the outcome—at least unless other factors are present. If the country or a good part of it goes into a recession, the out party will have an excellent chance of replacing the in party—regardless of the income distribution. Attacks on the super-rich may make good campaign rhetoric, but unless the underlying economic reality leads voters to believe that they (or the nation as a whole) are worse off then they were four years ago, the rhetoric, though good for applause lines, probably won't change many votes. There is a long list of political scientists of all ideologies who have looked at this matter, and (with quibbles) they are pretty much in agreement. Phillips does not refer to a single one of their studies.

For the Democrats to win the presidency requires no new ideas or class-based rhetoric. It requires only a stagnant or declining economy, a President caught up in a major scandal, or both. The Democrats may well get one or both before 1992. Then the problem they will have is to choose the kind of candidate they want. It is possible that they may choose the kind of populist Phillips seems to have in mind. If they were to do this because they were persuaded by Phillips's analysis of the state of American society, they would be doing a grave disservice to the nation.

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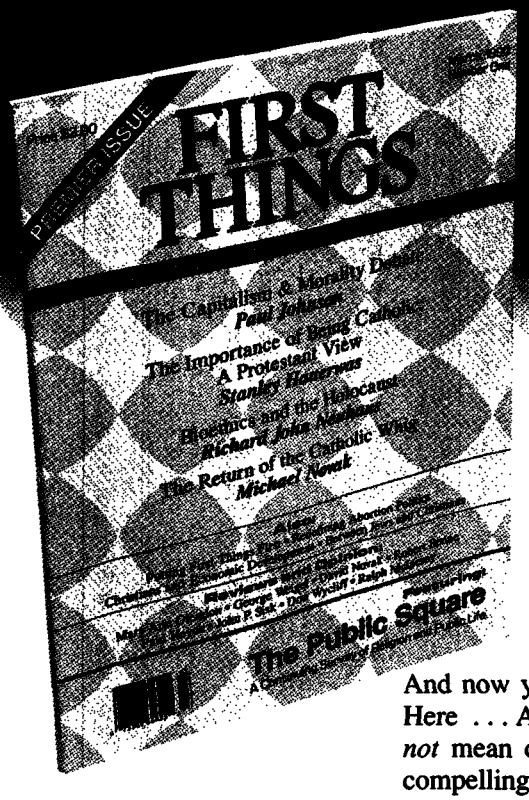

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Israel/Diaspora

THE FUTURE OF THE JEWS. By DAVID VITAL. *Harvard University Press. 161 pp. $18.95.*

Reviewed by ROBERT ALTER

DAVID VITAL brings to this extended essay on Jewish national identity the virtues of clarity and cogent analysis that have made him a distinguished historian of Zionism and a highly regarded authority on international relations. *The Future of the Jews* may indeed bring to bear excessive clarity on a subject clouded with stubborn ambiguities. In any case, it is a challenging book that raises important, troubling questions which need to be confronted.

Vital sets the grounds for his prognosis with an initial chapter devoted to the impact on Jewish peoplehood of the French Revolution and its Napoleonic aftermath. This fateful entry of the Jews into secular modernity entailed a new profession of primary allegiance to the nation-state rather than to a community of faith or to any transnational ideal of a Jewish people. He cites instructive contemporary documents that announce this switch in allegiance, and assuming it has in fact been fully internalized, he sees it as a key to what is happening globally among the Jews two centuries later. Not only is the first loyalty of Jews to the country in which they live, but everywhere, to a degree that far exceeds earlier Diaspora precedents, they take on the coloration of their national habitat—its political assumptions, its language and culture, its habits of mind. The often proclaimed unity of the Jewish people is thus rapidly turning into an obsolete myth and an empty slogan:

> Where there was once a single, if certainly a scattered and far from monolithic people—indeed, a nation—there is now a sort of archipelago of discrete islands composed of rather shaky communities of all qualities, shapes, and sizes, in which the Island of Israel, as it were, is fated increasingly to be in a class by itself.

Vital sees two basic, virtually opposed, classes of Jewish existence determined by the fundamental differences between "a congeries of voluntary societies" in the Diaspora and life in Israel under an elected Jewish government exercising the full range of authority, power, and legal coercion on and in behalf of its citizens. "And this absolutely crucial difference is being reinforced and intensified over and over again through the years by differences of language, of culture, of aspirations, of social outlook, and above all by situation—and therefore, necessarily, by differences of interest too."

The fierce political debate over Israeli policy in the occupied territories is construed as a prime symptom of that deep schism beneath a thin façade of national unity that is splitting the Jewish people apart. Vital concedes that there are vehement opponents of the occupation within Israel itself, but he intimates that the terms of the debate within Israel have to be different because the debaters there on both sides must be prepared to live with the consequences of the positions they endorse. By contrast, the Diaspora critics of Israeli policy, as free agents speaking from a distance, and in the U.S. influenced by American traditions of political moralism, approach political issues not in instrumental but in purely moral terms. They want Israel to be "a country of a kind as yet unknown to history . . . governed ultimately neither by need nor by circumstance, nor even the stated interests of its own inhabitants, but firmly and exclusively in the light of universal moral laws, the laws in question being those which all decent people believe applicable to their private relations." Vital is himself a political moderate, but he grimly notes that such insistence on purely moral rather than pragmatic thinking in politics is a recipe for national suicide.

Vital's prognosis is similar to one proposed in the 1960's by the French sociologist Georges Friedmann in *Fin du peuple juif?*—the Jews who remain in the Diaspora will eventually disappear through assimilation while those who have settled in Israel will become a new, wholly distinct people. The only difference is that Vital, from the perspective of secular Zionism, sees meaningful continuity between the reborn nation of Israel and the historical Jewish people, whereas Friedmann, viewing the process from the outside, saw a new people emerging in Israel, only nominally identified with the old one.

THIS IS a sobering analysis, and it would be foolhardy to assume that the future unity of the Jewish people is in any way assured. The circumstances, however, of Jewish existence are extraordinarily untidy, and Vital's account of them may be in a couple of crucial respects a little too neat. Although he is certainly right in contending that Zionism has redefined Jewish existence in more urgently political terms than Jews were ever willing to conceive in the pre-modern period, his argument is founded on a political determinism that requires critical scrutiny. His key assumption is that consciousness is determined by the frameworks of political organization. If Jews draw together as private individuals in voluntary organizations dominated by unelected oligarchies, while they owe allegiance as citizens to a Gentile state, they will exhibit a distinct, highly diluted order of Jewish consciousness, one in which categories "applicable to their private relations" are imposed on the public realm. If, on the other hand, they live under their own government—with their own language, and, to boot, their own peculiar social institutions, their own pop music, their own soccer teams—they are bound to have a different order of consciousness, individually and collectively.

One hardly wants to deny salient differences in mental habits, values, and allegiance between the "typical" Israeli and his American Jewish counterpart, but Vital's analysis provides little sense of the odd

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ROBERT ALTER, *Class of 1937 Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of California, Berkeley, is the author of, most recently,* The Pleasures of Reading in an Ideological Age *(Simon & Schuster).*

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and persistent connections between the two communities. There is no place in his account for belief as a determinant of consciousness, but belief continues to color the perception of reality of large segments of the Jewish people. I refer not merely to resurgent Orthodoxy (for better or for worse, a power to be reckoned with) and to the other branches of Judaism in America and, minimally, in Israel, but to the potent survival in the minds of many non-practicing Jews, both in the Diaspora and in Israel, of values originating in the world of belief: the importance of Jewish history, a sense of connection among the generations, the idea of the text as a vehicle of truth and the concomitant importance of intellectual work, an attachment to the possibility of redemption through history, and even the notion of the unity of the Jewish people.

I do not mean to suggest that all these surviving fragments of a traditional Jewish world view operate uniformly, or that the consequences of their operation are always happy ones. But they do help explain why there are still many peculiar convergences of attitude and identity on the two sides of the Israel-Diaspora rift. We have different languages, literally and figuratively, yet large numbers of American Jews at least pay lip-service to the ideal of Hebrew as a genuine second language for Jews in this country, and a handful actually realize the ideal, through the means of American Jewish educational institutions. The relentlessly moral, unpragmatic approach to politics, which Vital attributes to the location of the Diaspora Jew, is, as he is surely aware, abundantly present in Israel, not only in the Left-liberal opposition but also on the messianic Right. By contrast, in the continuing debate over what Israel should do about the Palestinians, the American Jewish community also has numerous and vocal members who insist on thinking about the problem in instrumental rather than in moral terms.

Altogether, it seems to me that there is much more cultural (and physical) circulation between Israel and the Diaspora than there was a generation ago. Among Israelis, the old Zionist attitude of dismissal of the Diaspora world has in many instances been replaced by a keen curiosity about the cultural life of the contemporary Diaspora. Jews on the other side of the divide now are often eager to know what is going on in Israeli culture—as one may see in the large American following for Hebrew fiction in translation, a phenomenon that would have been inconceivable twenty years ago.

David Vital is right to warn us about the forces that might in the long run lead to deep divisions within the Jewish people; but, for all the threat of divergence, the prosperous insurance broker with his four-bedroom house in Ramat Hasharon may not be that different from his American Jewish counterpart in Westchester County. A certain common sociology draws them together, an increasingly international material culture, but also a set of shared historical memories, a persistent background, even in the fullness of their secularity, of collective beliefs.

Austria & War Criminals

JUSTICE NOT VENGEANCE. By SIMON WIESENTHAL. *Grove Weidenfeld. 372 pp. $22.50.*

Reviewed by JACOB HEILBRUNN

SIMON WIESENTHAL, who has devoted his life to hunting down Nazis, believes that "guilt cannot be forgiven but only paid for by expiation." In his memoirs, which created a furor when they were published in Austria (where he now lives) in 1988, Wiesenthal explores the lack of remorse among former Austrian Nazis in the larger context of that country's approach to its past. This is not an autobiography in the strict sense—those wishing a fuller account of his life should turn to *The Murderers Among Us* (1967); rather, Wiesenthal shows here how his own pursuit of war criminals came to be entangled in the net of Austrian politics. Appropriately, *Justice Not Vengeance* reaches its climax in a narrative of his battles with the late Austrian chancellor, Bruno Kreisky.

The contrast between Kreisky, the product of an assimilated Viennese Jewish family, and Wiesenthal could hardly be starker. Wiesenthal is an *Ostjude* (East European Jew), born in 1908 into a traditional religious family in Buczacz, a small town in the easternmost corner of the Austro-Hungarian empire (also the birthplace of the Nobel Prize-winning novelist S.Y. Agnon). He had an early brush with anti-Semitism: in 1915, first the Cossacks and then Ukrainians stormed Buczacz, causing the family to flee to Vienna.

During the Nazi invasion of Russia at the outset of World War II, Wiesenthal, by then a professional architect, lived in Lvov, where he was captured by Ukrainians fight-

JACOB HEILBRUNN *has written for the* National Interest, Encounter, *and the* New Leader, *among other magazines.*

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ing on the German side; though thousands of Jews were slaughtered, he was spared when a former Ukrainian colleague recognized and hid him. Once the German army proper arrived, Wiesenthal and his wife were deported to the Janowska concentration camp where—his luck holding—they were assigned to work in a railway shop. Later he was removed to a death camp (the Polish resistance successfully hid his wife in Warsaw), then deported back to Janowska, thence to Buchenwald, and finally to Mauthausen, where he ended his captivity.

Not long after American forces liberated Mauthausen, Wiesenthal decided to devote his life to tracking down Nazis. What prompted this decision? In part, he writes, it was a beating administered to him by a Pole *after* the camp had been liberated. The Americans punished the Pole, and thus "contributed significantly to my recapturing the meaning of my life: to help restore justice by bringing to trial those who had . . . murdered my companions in the ghettos and my fellow prisoners in the concentration camps."

He also noticed that the Nazis, when ordered by American soldiers to bury Jews who had died of hunger, now shrank from tasks hardly unfamiliar to them. This, too, left a deep impression: "For the first time in my life I saw what enormous cowards these people were; how, instead of dealing with their guilt, they tried to deny it."

Wiesenthal, who could recall exactly the names and likenesses of numerous Nazis, volunteered to work with the Allied War Crimes Unit. But very soon he was contending with American and Soviet plans to exploit rather than punish war criminals. A typical case was that of Dr. Wasyl Stroncickij, exposed by Wiesenthal for murdering Ukrainian Jews, then set free by American army intelligence as a source of information on the Soviet Union. Wiesenthal was stunned.

THERE were other impediments. By the close of the war, the Nazis had established a sophisticated escape route to South America that would be used by thousands of war criminals. The immense resources necessary for this enterprise, dubbed Odessa, came from the rapacity that had been the ally of their murderous program: with the Nazis, writes Wiesenthal, "it was never just a case of exterminating the Jewish race, but always one of Aryanizing Jewish assets, plundering Jewish homes, and prising gold from the teeth of Jews after they had been gassed." They were aided as well by individuals within the structure of the Catholic Church who helped establish Odessa's escape route between Austria and Italy, the "monastery route."

Wiesenthal's account here of the Eichmann case, which catapulted him to fame, adds some interesting details to the record. For years he attempted to follow Eichmann in the latter's South American travels, and in 1960 arranged for secret photos of family members which enabled the Mossad, Israel's secret service, to establish his identity. (Eichmann, fearing that snapshots might be used after the war to identify him, had resolutely refused to be photographed and "wished to be known as little as possible.") Nevertheless, exactly how much Wiesenthal contributed to Eichmann's capture remains a matter of controversy: Isser Harel, the former head of the Mossad who led the kidnapping effort, has insisted that Wiesenthal's role has been exaggerated.

Whatever the truth, Wiesenthal was indisputably a pioneer in pursuing Nazis during the late 1940's and 1950's—a time when few governments were interested in bringing them to justice. As Wiesenthal tells it, the West German government only began to look for Nazis actively after the worldwide publicity given to the Eichmann trial in 1961. One reason for dilatoriness was the fact that the postwar German police and judiciary were riddled with holdovers from the Nazi era.

But if in the 1950's West Germany shirked its duty to face up to the Nazi past, Austria's delinquency has been much longer-lived. During World War II, Austrians, who accounted for only 8 percent of the Third Reich's population, committed half the murders of Jews. After the war, both the conservative People's party and the Socialist party, while contriving to present Austria as the first victim of Hitlerian aggression, simultaneously courted the votes of Nazis and ex-Nazis. In addition, Jews who had fled Austria during the war were discouraged from returning.

It was the Socialist party in particular, Wiesenthal writes, that was the "principal apologist of former Nazis." During the 1970's the party's leader, Bruno Kreisky, a man who tried to suppress his Jewish ancestry, "systematically demolished the opposition to former Nazis" in government posts, inviting four former Nazis, including one SS officer, to join his cabinet. When Wiesenthal exposed their pasts to the German weekly *Der Spiegel*, Kreisky indignantly retorted that a "Nazi party member should be permitted to hold political office in Austria, so long as he has not had any crimes proved against him."

IN 1975 Wiesenthal revealed that Friedrich Peter, a favorite of Kreisky's, had been a member of an SS unit which had murdered thousands of Jews. Now the battle between Wiesenthal and Kreisky was joined. With the help of the Polish secret service, Kreisky produced forged documents purporting to prove that Wiesenthal had collaborated with the Gestapo; later he called him a "mafioso." Wiesenthal sued. In the end, the lawsuit was withdrawn, and Kreisky stated in parliament that he had never accused Wiesenthal of collaboration.

Wiesenthal remains troubled and wounded by his bout with Kreisky, whom he calls "a Jew striving for total assimilation. . . . For this reason—and not, as he pretends, because of our political conflicts—he hates me." Nevertheless, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that politics did indeed play a role. For in dealing with the Nazi past of Friedrich Peter on the one hand, and with that of Kurt Waldheim on the other hand, Wiesenthal employs a bit of a double standard. Initially, indeed, he defended Waldheim, who is a member of the People's party, with which Wiesenthal has close ties. Here he attacks at length the handling of the Waldheim affair by the World Jewish Congress, while devoting only

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cursory attention to the accusations leveled against the former Austrian President.

Still, Wiesenthal observes correctly enough that the Waldheim affair has served to expose the core of Austrian anti-Semitism lurking under the veneer of Austrian democracy. In some ways, Austria's relation to its Nazi past resembles less that of West Germany than that of East Germany. Both countries have refused to pay reparations to Jews, and each has preferred to portray itself as a victim of Hitler. But when, in April of this year, Prime Minister Lothar de Mazière of East Germany acknowledged the enduring obligation of guilt incurred by his country toward the Jews, he did more in one day to expiate that guilt than Austria has done in forty years. In these absorbing memoirs, Wiesenthal goes some way toward counting up the cost, to Austria itself, of its ongoing destructive attempt to suppress and to deny its past.

Double-Portion

AMERICAN CASSANDRA: THE LIFE OF DOROTHY THOMPSON. By PETER KURTH. *Little, Brown. 587 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by KENNETH S. LYNN

THE German playwright Carl Zuckmayer's word for Dorothy Thompson was "double-portion," and it seems right. Everything that was important about her was characterized by an uncommon magnitude, from her multifaceted career as a foreign correspondent, syndicated newspaper columnist, radio broadcaster, and lecturer to her big-bodied, snow-goddess sexiness, her highly emotional argumentative style, her agonizing inner conflicts, and her astonishing energy, which she augmented with Dexedrine and a variety of "uppers."

It was, then, entirely in keeping with her life that at the time of her death in 1961 she should have willed to her alma mater, Syracuse University, an archive of corre-

KENNETH S. LYNN *is the author of* Hemingway *and other books on American literature and culture.*

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spondence, family scrapbooks, manuscripts, diaries, notes, and miscellaneous papers that fills 150 research boxes and measures 70 linear feet. Her biographer, Peter Kurth, has indeed been fortunate in the materials he has had to work with. That he has largely been equal to their challenge is fortunate for us. *American Cassandra* brings an extraordinary woman to life.

IN THE summer of 1900, just before her seventh birthday, a little girl stood in her parents' house in Tonawanda, New York, and watched the approach of a killer cyclone. "Are we going to die?" she cried, and her father, a Methodist minister, replied as he always replied in crises, "We are in the hands of God." Through all the vicissitudes of a cyclonic century, Dorothy Thompson was sustained by her father's faith and uplifted by his example. As she declared in 1957, her political philosophy was grounded "in the Evangelium"—in "those precepts of respect for truth, mercy, forgiveness, humility, and charity, taught and admonished by Him whom I do not hesitate to call the Lord and Savior of my soul"—while her work as an opinion-maker was a secular form of preaching. "There is only one effective revolution," she told the graduating class at Syracuse in 1937, "and that is the revolution represented by the evangelical idea of conversion: that men see where they have been wrong; that a light dawns upon them; and that they change their ways."

After finishing college in 1914, Dorothy Thompson was involved in suffragist agitation and social-welfare reform for six years, then set sail for Europe, primarily with the intention of doing some free-lance reporting from Moscow. For a revolutionary force was still unfolding there which she likened to "the elemental force of nature itself, sweeping away the old and outworn, and creating in blood a whole great new order of things." Her crossing of the Atlantic, however, was made in the company of a group of Zionists: rabbis, writers, and lawyers en route to London for a conference on the future of Palestine. She talked with them, she flirted with them, and with her pink-and-white complexion and everything that went with it, she wowed them. By the time she reached London, she not only had a newspaper story in her head but, as Kurth vividly notes, "the beginnings of a legend on her hands—the legend of a fresh-faced girl from the American heartland, 'an amiable blue-eyed tornado,' who roared through Europe stirring up trouble and making news happen wherever she went."

Having acquired a set of credentials as a special correspondent for the Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, she established herself in Vienna. Guided by the Manchester *Guardian*'s bureau chief, Marcel Fodor, who wanted to marry her but settled for being her tutor, she began to supplement her familiarity with the classic works of English and American civilization, a fair number of which she knew more or less by heart (e.g., all the sonnets of Shakespeare, whole chapters of the Bible, lengthy sections of *Leaves of Grass*, dozens of the Psalms, and the Constitution of the United States in its sonorous entirety), with ambitious readings in the politics and culture of Central Europe. Over the next several years, she further widened her horizons through the interviews she obtained with a range of political figures extending from Trotsky to Ataturk to Thomas Masaryk and with such cultural giants as Freud, Richard Strauss, and Romain Rolland.

By 1924, her combination of sophistication and audacity made Dorothy Thompson the acknowledged equal of the American newsmen known as "the high-flying young falcons," who had revolutionized foreign reporting in the years since the Armistice, transforming its traditional emphasis on diplomatic events into a search for scoops about anything that might earn a headline back home. "Most of us traveled steadily, met constantly, exchanged information, caroused, took in each other's washing, and even when most fiercely competitive, were devoted friends," John Gunther recalled, and the compatriots he was thinking of were the glamorous Floyd Gibbons, with his trademark white eyepatch, William Stoneman, Vincent Sheean, Frazier "Spike" Hunt, Edgar Ansel Mowrer, H.R. Knickerbocker, William L. Shirer—and Dorothy Thompson.

Nevertheless, she was never satisfied. "This isn't enough for me," she told the British novelist Phyllis Bottome, one of her closest friends in Vienna. "It's not what I really want. I'm nothing in my own country. I want to be something there—something no other woman has been yet." At the same time, she had no plans for returning to the States. Nor could she say what it was she wanted to become.

CONFUSION also marked her love life. In 1923, she had the bad judgment to marry Joseph Bard, who "looked like an Egyptian prince," but was actually a half-Jewish, half-Croatian native of Budapest. While he managed to support himself with part-time work for Reuter's and the Associated Press, Bard had pretensions as a philosopher and made a great show of being in the throes of writing—in three languages, simultaneously—a vast treatise on the mind of Europe. The young Dorothy Thompson exaltedly regarded him as a genius and took forever to realize that his main interests in life were fleshly. "Have you ever met a man who has slept with 126 women?" she eventually asked John Gunther.

Her friendship with Carl Zuckmayer dated from 1925, the year in which she and Bard, much against Bard's wishes, moved to Berlin, so that she could be where the action was. For as she later observed in the introduction she supplied to one of Zuckmayer's books, "These were the brilliant, feverish years when Berlin was, in a cultural sense, the capital of the world. These were the days when the German mind was open to every stream of thought from every point of the earth. Every current beat upon Berlin." The luminaries among whom she now moved at embassy parties included Klaus and Erika Mann, Franz Werfel and Alma Mahler, Lotte Lenya and Bertolt Brecht, Rebecca West and her latest lover, Lord Beaverbrook, and Harold Nicolson and Vita Sackville-West.

Never had she been so stimulated. Phyllis Bottome remembered

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her from this period as "radiantly pretty," and Zuckmayer affirmed that "her face always looked as if she had just been running in a stiff sea or mountain breeze, and her bright clear eyes flashed and gleamed with eagerness and enthusiasm." Yet he also noted "a hidden nervousness," which she expressed through her "incessant, hasty, uncontrollable cigarette smoking." Certainly she was nervous about her marriage, especially after Bard left her for an extended stay in London. At last she learned that he had conveniently fallen in love with a rich young Englishwoman. Flings undertaken in reprisal with Floyd Gibbons and H.R. Knickerbocker were forerunners of the adulterous affairs that would become common practice for Dorothy in her second marriage. She also made some experiments with lesbian love, although none of them had the significance of her intense relationship in the early 1930's with the German writer Christa Winsloe, whose fictionalization of a Prussian girls' school became the basis for the famous lesbian film, *Mädchen in Uniform.*

In January 1927, she filed for divorce. "I have been driven into a state of hysteria," she reproachfully reported to Bard. For a time she was in treatment with the psychiatrist Theodor Reik, and as spring arrived she apparently thought of killing herself. Then on July 8, at a tea party at the German Foreign Ministry, she was introduced to Sinclair Lewis. His wit—and his fame as a novelist—inspired her to invite him to her thirty-fourth birthday party the following evening. Not only did he show up, but he stayed and stayed, long after Dorothy's other guests had departed. Around three in the morning, he asked her to marry him. A day or so later, she described him to her ex-husband. "He is a very curious and demonic person, hard-drinking, blasphemous, possessed, I often think, of a devil. . . . he is getting a divorce and wants to marry me, but I am very doubtful." Their wedding took place in London the following April.

"Why did she marry him?" Mark Schorer asks in *Sinclair Lewis: An American Life,* a book which is as soft on Dorothy as it is hard on Lewis. Her reason, Schorer says, is that "she loved him." Pieces of evidence in *American Cassandra* serve to expose the shallow romanticism of this reply. Dorothy's intimates in Berlin were aware that she continued to be assailed by doubts about the wisdom of marrying a man whose drunken, hate-filled rages had spared neither her nor her friends. Furthermore, the Chicago *Tribune*'s Berlin correspondent, Sigrid Schultz, remembered the day that Dorothy came to her and said that she was in a quandary because there were two men who wanted to marry her. (The other was H.R. Knickerbocker.) Yet Dorothy's Berlin diary reveals that she was sometimes moved by a tender passion for Lewis. The resulting emotional contest left her feeling utterly helpless. "I am afraid of my own 'striving, energetic, ascending' mind," she cried out in another of the letters she was still writing to Joseph Bard by the dozens. "I feel the conflict between myself as a mentality and a personality and myself as a woman and a lover. I am divided. Broken."

Upon her return to America, Dorothy denounced her native land as "fundamentally hostile to women." Yet as Dorothy Thompson and as Mrs. Sinclair Lewis, she herself had no difficulty in arranging public appearances or landing assignments from magazine editors. With the rise of the Nazis, she researched and wrote the first of more than a dozen pieces on Germany for the *Saturday Evening Post.* By 1934, she was widely recognized as, in John Gunther's words, "the best journalist this generation has produced in any country." Two years later, the New York *Herald-Tribune* offered her a three-times-a-week column, to be positioned, on alternating days, in the space opposite Walter Lippmann's. At the pinnacle of the column's twenty-two-year run, "On the Record" was syndicated in 150 newspapers with a combined circulation of seven and a half million. Through radio commentaries for NBC, incessant lecture tours, and more articles for the *Saturday Evening Post* (not to mention the *Ladies' Home Journal* and other publications), she reached an even huger audience. *Time*'s cover story about her in 1939 called her the most influential woman in America next to Eleanor Roosevelt.

By placating Hitler, many people in the 30's thought, peace in Europe could be maintained; but the nub of the Thompson message, enunciated as early as 1934 in a speech to the Foreign Policy Association and elaborated upon for the next five years, was that "Germany has gone to war already and the rest of the world does not believe it." Cassandra was also right about Japanese aggression, stating a full week before Pearl Harbor that the United States would be attacked, since the breakdown of the Washington negotiations with Japanese diplomats indicated war, and the predictable Axis tactic was undeclared assault.

Kurth argues—and I agree—that, having begun World War II as America's undisputed primary agitator against the Nazis (her record on this score included expulsion from the Reich in 1934), Dorothy Thompson ended it as America's strongest voice in defense of a sane, rational, reasonable peace for a nation that Hitler had left in rubble. Although "neither pro- nor anti-Germany, as a nation and people," she nevertheless stuck to a "dogged conviction that someday, somehow, Germany will lead herself and help Europe to a new humanism. . . ."

After the war, too, she was fervently anti-Soviet, yet this did not prevent her from arraigning America for its shortcomings. The "downward adjustment of standards" in the schools bothered her particularly, as did the concomitant triumph of relativism, the emphasis on "self-expression," and the erection of anti-discrimination into a shibboleth of our times. "For the first time as far as I know in any society," she wrote,

> mediocrity has been clothed in the raiment of *morality.* It is "anti-American" to be discriminating on any level—socially, racially, religiously, culturally. Everything and everyone is as good as anything and anyone, and whoever does not think so is an enemy of democracy. But if everything and everyone is as good as anything and anyone, then the

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measure of value *has* to be set at the lowest social and intellectual level. . . . And this simply means the disappearance of culture.

Concerning the domestic political scene, she wrote in the 30's about FDR's New Deal that his was

> the most literate administration that this country has ever had since the early days when politics was believed to be a gentleman's profession, and it is certainly the most talkative. It is also probably one of the most truly representative of administrations, for it shares practically all the illusions of the typical American intellectual. It believes that any action is better than none, that the scientific attitude is synonymous with being willing to try anything once; that economic reform can be interpreted in terms of social uplift; and that the lion and the lamb can be brought to lie down together by persuasion.

At the end of her life, she contemplated without enthusiasm the Nixon-Kennedy race for the presidency. She had never had any use for Nixon, but the "obvious movie-star qualities" of Kennedy bothered her, too. "There is something about him," she wrote, that is "spoiled and slightly neurotic. I have seen too many of these charismatic personalities in public not to feel queasy about them."

AMONG her errors of judgment—and there were many of them—perhaps the most arrogant was her attack on the Social Security bill, and by all odds the most preposterous was her 1939 plea for an unbelligerent response by the British cabinet to Hitler's imminent invasion of Poland. In a ten-page cablegram to Harold Nicolson, she declared that

> THE BRITISH CABINET MUST . . . DELAY ITS ANSWER WHILE IT ENGAGES IN MEDITATION AND PRAYER TRUSTING IN GOD TO REVEAL TO ENGLAND'S LEADERS THE WAY TO A TRUE AND JUST PEACE FOR ALL PEOPLES EVERYWHERE POLES AND GERMANS AND ITALIANS AND FRENCHMEN AND ENGLISHMEN CALLING ON ALL CHRISTIANS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD TO HOLD FAST TO THE FAITH WHICH THEY PROFESS. . . .

Then there was her change of mind about Zionism. For years, she had been widely regarded as one of the movement's most effective non-Jewish spokesmen. After her first trip to Palestine in 1945, however, she announced that Zionism was not a righteous crusade, because the Zionist leaders envisaged "not a small state of Jews who chose to live in Israel," but an aggressive, chauvinistic powerhouse. While she privately described the Arabs as a "super-sensitive" bunch who had been victimized by "a psychological trauma involving 'status' and inferiority," she publicly avoided the question of the survival chances of a powerless Jewish state in a pathologically anti-Jewish part of the world, instead referring scornfully to Israel as "the 49th state" of the Union, and "the only nation in history to have been canonized at birth."

Terrible guilt feelings about Michael Lewis, the troubled, violence-prone child of a nightmarish marriage and the victim of neglect by both his parents, prompted America's second-most influential woman to affirm on the one hand that children would "understand it" if their mothers stayed away from home for long periods of time in connection with their engagement in "useful and necessary" work, and on the other hand to assert disingenuously that she had "an ever-increasing respect for women who stick to their knitting." Even more nauseating was the assurance she offered to homemakers that "It is never futile to grow sweet peas, or arrange roses in a bowl."

WHILE the fame she had attained was thrilling, maintaining it was nerve-wracking. She drank too much in consequence, she could not operate without her pep pills, and in the summer of 1940 she came close to a nervous breakdown. In 1937, the bitter, drunken Lewis, reeling in defeat from the loss of his novelistic gift, deserted Dorothy and Twin Farms, their lovely acreage in Barnard, Vermont, but their divorce did not take place until January 1942.

The following summer, Dorothy met a refugee artist and sculptor, Maxim Kopf, fifty years old to her forty-nine, who had been born in Vienna and raised in Prague. A year later, for the third time in her life, she took a husband whose sensibility she regarded as more creative than hers. Kopf was different, however, from his predecessors. Six feet one and hugely muscled from the year of hard labor he had spent in a Vichy-France concentration camp, he was a "hunk" and a "stallion" (in the recollection of his Barnard friends), and his powerful sexuality was totally focused upon his bride, her history of sexual ambivalence notwithstanding.

Dorothy's affair with Christa Winsloe had ended in 1934, when Christa attended the Salzburg Festival and fell in love with the Italian basso, Ezio Pinza. It was reminiscent of Dorothy's breakup with Joseph Bard that she sent Christa valedictory letters. "I had a strange dream last night," she said in one of them. "I dreamed I was putting out into a very rough sea in a frail ship, and the crew were all women. I was afraid, and woke up, sweating . . . Christa!"

Did she continue to have such dreams for the rest of her life? *American Cassandra* offers us no warrant for thinking so. What we do know is that she achieved a profound sexual satisfaction with Kopf. While crossing the Atlantic in the late 1940's, she whispered to the publisher Cass Canfield that "When I make love the house shakes."

ON April 5, 1942, the Nazi propaganda chief, Josef Goebbels, devoted a passage in his diary to Dorothy Thompson. How had it ever come to pass, he wondered, that "such dumb broads [*so dumme Frauenzimmer*], whose heads can be filled only with straw," had been permitted to criticize "a historic figure of the greatness of the Fuehrer"? Clearly, through all the years of its evil successes, the Nazi leadership had continued to be bugged by the eloquence, the intelligence, the wit, and, above all, the moral passion of this American journalist. *American Cassandra* very usefully reminds us of those qualities and of the woman who embodied them.

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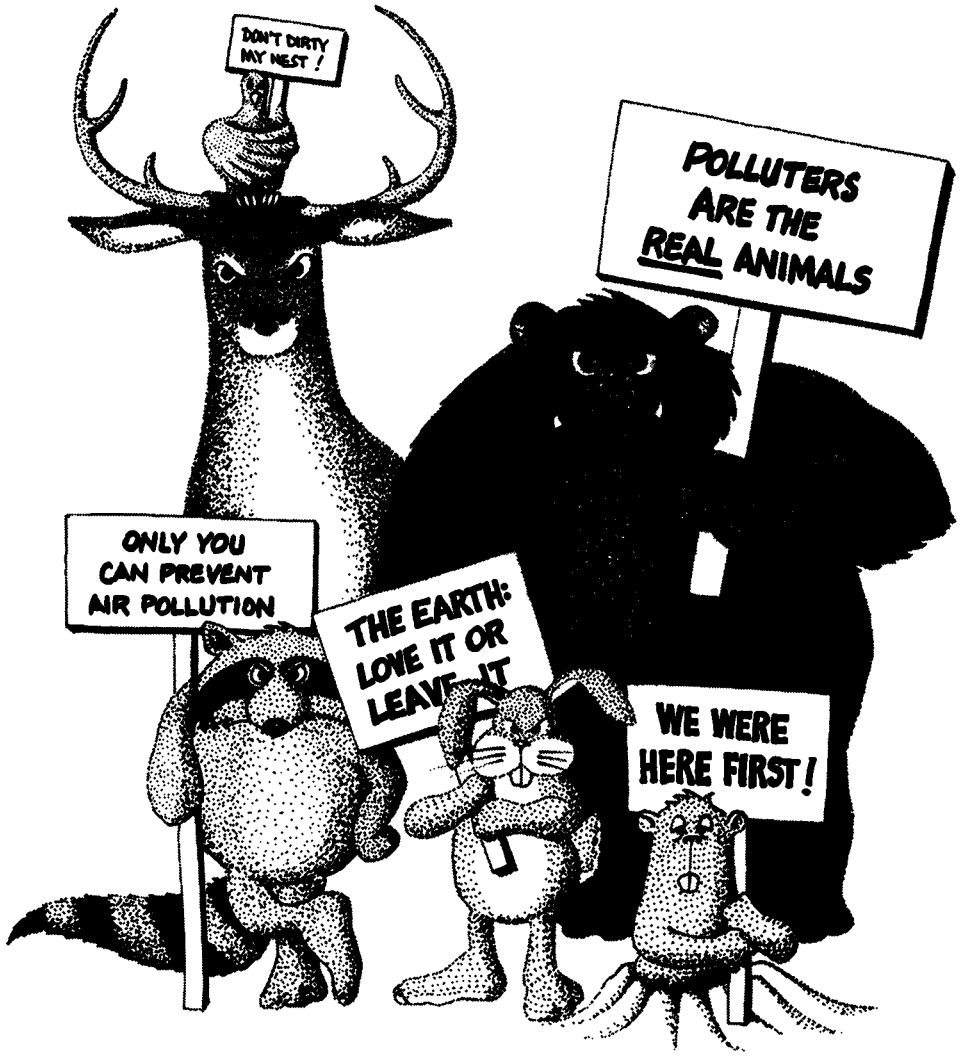
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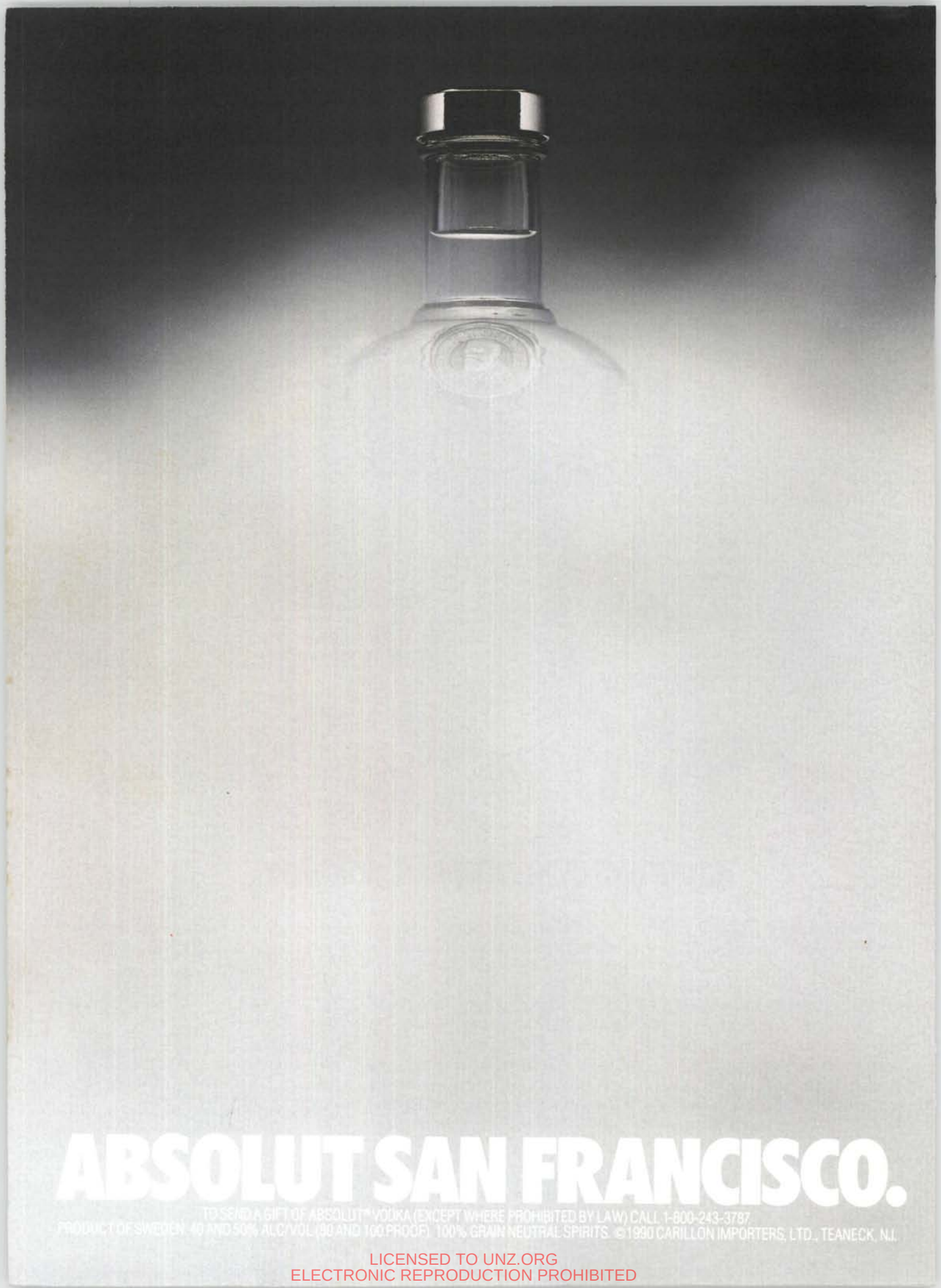
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